

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)

other names/site number Johnson Pit #30, Robert Morris Earthwork

2. Location

street & number 21610 37th Place S ☐ not for publication

city or town SeaTac ☐ vicinity

state Washington code WA county King County code 033 zip code 98032

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

X national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria

X A B X C D

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

WASHINGTON STATE SHPO

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official

Date

Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

 entered in the National Register

 determined eligible for the National Register

 determined not eligible for the National Register

 removed from the National Register

 other (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)
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5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	private
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
		buildings
		district
1		site
	1	structure
	5	object
1	6	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

None

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Extractive facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE / work of art

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Other: Earthwork

Other: Land Art

Other: Post-Industrial

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: _____

walls: _____

roof: _____

other: EARTH

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Narrative Description

Resource Name	Resource Type	Contributing Status	Date	Description
<i>Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)</i>	Site	Contributing	1979	The designed landscape.
Tree stumps	Structure	Non contributing	1979, 1996	Three remaining replicas of the tree stumps from Morris' original design.
Perimeter trail	Object	Non contributing	1996	Earthen trail surfaced with crushed stone.
Stairs	Object	Non contributing	1996, 2018	Four stairs, one along the perimeter trail and three descending into the basin area.
Foot bridge	Object	Non contributing	1996, 2018	Wood foot bridge along the perimeter trail.
Bench	Object	Non contributing	1997, 2018	Wood bench.
Granite marker	Object	Non contributing	1997	Granite entrance marker.

Robert Morris' *Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)* occupies a 4.25-acre site at South 216th Street and 40th Street South in the city of SeaTac, King County, Washington, approximately 10 miles south of Seattle. Steeply sloped, the site gains roughly 60 feet in elevation along its east-west axis. The triangular site is bounded by 37th Place South and 40th Place South to the southwest and southeast, respectively, and along the north by the original 1905 lot line. The site was formerly used as a county-owned gravel pit.

The Morris Earthwork is a work of public art created for the 1979 symposium, "Earthworks: Land Reclamation as Sculpture," sponsored by the King County Arts Commission and the King County Department of Public Works. The site's high point is on the west where the parking lot overlooks the earthwork and the Kent Valley beyond. The site's lower two thirds is graded into concentric terraces, earthen benches connected by 10' vertical slopes, that produce a bean-shaped amphitheater tilting northwest to southeast across the site. From the north, five pairs of slopes and benches ring the site, carving out a central basin. The western-most bench ties back into the surrounding topography and is replaced on the east side by a mound-capped slope that descends south and east to the site's boundaries.

Three wood poles approximately 10" in diameter and varying in height from 4' to 6' dot the westside slope. These are the remaining restored elements of the original design's tree stumps. They have become known as "ghost trees" since the work was completed. The poles were treated with a preservative and blackened like the original stumps.¹ The color is primarily visible on their cut ends.

Although Morris left portions of the site ungraded, the entire site is designed and should be thought of as a landscape that includes the parking lot and the ungraded areas in addition to the heavily graded terraces and mound.

Morris' design specified that the site be covered with rye grass, a perennial, cool-season grass. The original seeding contained a mix of rye grass and clover. The site has been overseeded with rye grass throughout the years but is now covered with a mix of turf grasses.

¹ Cath Brunner, former Public Art Director, 4Culture, video conversation with authors, December 16, 2020.

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The site's north and east edges are lined with bigleaf maple (*Acer macrophylla*), Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus armeniacus*), and Scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*). The eastern slope between the mound and 40th Place South is inaccessible due to dense vegetation that has grown up since the earthwork was constructed. Morris did not object to this vegetation during a site visit in 1995 since it discouraged unauthorized access from the road below.² The shallow water table at the bottom of the site's central basin supports willows (*Salix sp.*), red alder (*Alnus rubra*), cat tails (*Typha sp.*), and other volunteer vegetation that is periodically removed.³ A 3' high chain-link fence lines the site's perimeter. A gate on the site's south side at the intersection with 40th Place South provides access for maintenance.

A parking lot at the top of the site provides parking for five cars, including one accessible space, and serves as the intended entrance to the site. The lot is sited where Morris specified although it has been reconfigured multiple times. Most notably, Morris placed the entrance drive at the lot's north end, entering due east and perpendicular to the lot from 37th Place South but this was never implemented. The driveway is on the lot's south end, entering at an angle from the southeast. This change was discussed at a pre-construction conference on July 30, 1979, and has been the driveway's only orientation since it was constructed.

The parking lot was reconfigured in 1984-1985. The number of parking stalls was reduced from nine to five and chain link fencing was added along the lot's east edge. The fencing is used to create two zig-zag pedestrian entrances to the site at the parking lot's north and south ends. The perimeter fence and offset entrance configurations are meant to prevent bicycles and motorbikes from accessing the earthwork. Two bike racks, a garbage container, and a recycling container are adjacent to the south pedestrian entrance, amenities that have been added over time, beginning with the parking lot work in the mid-1980s. A vehicle gate can be manually closed when desired; it is currently unlocked at dawn and locked at dusk. Steel bollards filled with concrete line the west and north edges of the parking lot. Parking spaces are configured east-west with wheel stops on the east side.

A granite marker placed along the driveway in 1997 reads, "Untitled / Earthwork / Robert Morris / 1979 / King County Arts Commission."

A gravel-lined perimeter trail constructed in 1996 in consultation with Morris rings the earthwork, allowing visitors to traverse the site from above the terraces. Beginning at the parking lot, a staircase crafted with 4"x4" wood risers and earthen treads runs for 140' along the site's north edge. A perpendicular stairway of three risers branches off to the south, leading visitors into the site and a single 8'-long wood bench with prospect over the earthwork. A 12'10" x 3' wood-plank footbridge spans a drainage swale along the southwest section of the route. A series of three staggered staircases descend from the northside trail to the bottom of the basin, connecting the lower terraces' benches at 130', 120', and 110' elevations. Social trails are also present, particularly on the west side of the site. Two of these well-worn trails descend from the east and west directly down to the central basin. The perimeter trail was resurfaced with compacted gravel in 2018. At the same time, the bridge, bench, and parking lot retaining wall were replaced in kind along with the staircases' wood risers.⁴

² Cath Brunner, video conversation with authors.

³ Jordan Howland, Curator & Collections Manager, 4Culture, "Scope of Service at Robert Morris Earthwork – SeaTac," email to authors, January 4, 2021.

⁴ Jordan Howland, Curator & Collections Manager, 4Culture, phone conversation with authors, February 17, 2021.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☒ G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Art

Landscape Architecture

Period of Significance

1979-1980

Significant Dates

July 1979 - August 1979: The symposium, "Earthworks: Land Reclamation as Sculpture," takes place.

August 1979 – Dec 1979: The earthwork is constructed.

May 1980 – Formal public dedication.

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Morris, Robert, (Artist)

D.J. Hopkins Co., Inc., (Builder)

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Narrative Statement of Significance

Robert Morris' site work, *Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)*, in Seatac, Washington is a nationally significant work of Land Art designed and constructed as a series of contoured slopes and terraces on the site of a former county-owned gravel pit. The site is historically significant under Criterion A for its direct association with the King County Arts Commission's symposium, "Earthworks: Land Reclamation as Sculpture." The earthwork sculpture was built as the sole demonstration piece for the symposium. The piece's construction and the symposium's approach to engage artists in the reclamation and re-imagining of formerly industrial public lands was pivotal to expanding both the conceptual scope of the Land Art movement and the role artists play in public works projects. This project was the first time in the United States that funding from a 1 Percent for Art program was used for an art-based reclamation project. The collaborative relationship between King County Arts Commission and the Department of Public Works was a unique partnership at the time and laid the groundwork for what is now a standard practice of including artists in the development and planning of public spaces.

Johnson Pit #30 is also significant under Criterion C as a seminal example of its type; a work of the Land Art movement, and is considered the first piece of Land Art in the country built to reclaim industrially abused land. Furthermore, the site is historically significant as a representative example of the work of Robert Morris, a key writer and artist of the Land Art movement, who maintained a prominent status in contemporary art throughout the 20th century, traversing media and movements. Morris was chosen by the King County Arts Commission because of his international notoriety as a contemporary artist and influential role in the Land Art movement.⁵ The site is one of only two constructed earthworks designed by Morris within the United States.

Completed in 1979, *Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)* is less than 50 years old but meets the threshold for exceptional significance under Consideration G. The site was the first example of Land Art to reclaim a post-industrial site in the United States and remains a bold and uncompromised example of the process, making it exceptionally significant within the national and international context of Land Art.

Robert Morris submitted his site design in the spring of 1979 and the earthwork was constructed between August and December of the same year. King County accepted the construction as complete in May 1980. The Earthworks Symposium took place in August 1979 as construction began. The period of significance begins in 1979 the year of the symposium and construction of Johnson Pit and ends in 1980, the year the earthwork was formally dedicated.

THE EARTHWORKS SYMPOSIUM

The 1979 symposium, "Earthworks: Land Reclamation as Sculpture," co-sponsored by the King County Arts Commission and the King County Department of Public Works, was initiated by the Arts Commission to establish the legitimacy of art as a tool to reclaim industrially abused sites, such as mines and landfills. As an integral part of the symposium, they proposed a pilot project to serve as a model for others to look to, both as a process and as a built design. The result is the nominated site, *Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)*. The symposium and pilot project established that art could be an effective alternative to an approach of reclaiming post-industrial sites dictated solely by legal requirements, while also providing a cultural benefit to the public.

The King County Arts Commission was established at the end of 1966 and elected its first chairman, architect David Johnston.⁶ Johnston described the Arts Commission as, "the aesthetic eyes of the county, a device the county never had

⁵ David Allen Jones, *Technical Report, Earthworks: Land Reclamation as Sculpture*, (Seattle, WA: King County Arts Commission, 1981), 4, "Earthworks Symposium Administrative files," Series 278, King County Archives, Seattle, Washington (hereafter referred to as KC Archives).

⁶ "New Arts Group Holds Meeting," *The Seattle Times*, March 10, 1967, 28.

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before.”⁷ The commission was expanded by the King County Council in May 1974 to add an additional four members, bringing the total to 16 commissioners.⁸ The Arts Commission was empowered to work by itself and through partnerships to initiate and sponsor programs that supported the visual and performing arts by distributing grant funds and selecting artists for County projects.

In 1972, the commission gained its first professional staff position and hired Yankee Johnson who served as the commission’s Executive Director. Five years later, Jerry Allen was brought on as Visual Arts Coordinator. Allen, a practicing sculptor, also oversaw the Arts Commission’s 1 Percent for Art program.

King County’s 1 Percent for Art program was established in 1973 and specified that one percent of the cost of County construction projects be dedicated to incorporating works of art into the project or another public facility. The ordinance was proposed to the King County Council in January 1973, the same week that a similar proposal was made to the Seattle City Council.⁹ The King County version was passed in less than three weeks, while the City of Seattle version was not approved until May.¹⁰ This made the King County program the first government in the Northwest and the first county in the United States to establish a 1 Percent for Art Program.^{11 12}

The King County Arts Commission administered the program and advised on selecting artists and reviewing the design and placement of art funded through the program. The King County ordinance included language not found in the Seattle version that also allowed the program to fund performing arts facilities.¹³ It’s easy to imagine that Yankee Johnson had something to do with this stipulation given his background as co-founder of the Skid Road Theatre and house manager for ACT and Seattle Repertory Theatre.¹⁴ The King County program generated about \$40,000 to \$50,000 its first four years and seems to have avoided the controversies that plagued its Seattle counterpart, such as proposals to restrict the program to only new construction and public displeasure that the art was either in bad taste or hidden away inside city buildings.^{15 16} Washington State went on to adopt a percent-for-art program the following year.

In the summer of 1977, Allen proposed that the Arts Commission sponsor a major sculpture symposium. At the time producing a project like this fell outside of the commission’s mandate and was an ambitious and unorthodox pursuit for the agency. When the Seattle Arts Commission was approached about collaborating on the project, they begged off, questioning in part whether it was an appropriate activity for an arts commission to pursue.¹⁷ Allen’s enthusiasm for a symposium may have been buoyed by a 10-fold increase in the county’s 1 Percent for Art budget that year driven by a capital improvement program at Harborview Hospital.¹⁸ He also would have been aware of the high-profile installation of Michael Heizer’s sculpture *Adjacent, Against, Upon* the previous December at Seattle’s Myrtle Edwards Park sponsored by the Seattle Arts Commission and their 1 Percent for Art program.

By April 1978, the symposium concept was approved by the Arts Commission’s Visual Arts Committee, and they had fully committed themselves to the project by authorizing an application to the National Endowment for the Arts for grant money. Allen examined 1 Percent for Art funds to identify potential sources of additional support for the project and found \$77,000 that the County’s Department of Public Works had generated through infrastructure projects that

⁷ Jerry Bergsman, “New County Building May Face Delay,” *The Seattle Times*, August 2, 1967, 4.

⁸ King County Ordinance No. 1991, May 14, 1974, accessed May 6, 2021, https://kingcounty.gov/council/clerk/search_archive.aspx.

⁹ Wayne Johnson, “Public Art Ordinances Proposed,” *The Seattle Times*, January 24, 1973, 52.

¹⁰ Wayne Johnson, “New County Law,” *The Seattle Times*, February 21, 1973, 60.

¹¹ Jones, *Technical Report*, 15.

¹² Alan J. Stein, “Seattle’s 1 Percent for Art Program,” accessed May 2, 2021, <https://www.historylink.org/File/10645>.

¹³ Johnson, “New County Law.”

¹⁴ Jones, *Technical Report*, pg. 18.

¹⁵ Jones, *Technical Report*, 15.

¹⁶ Stein, “Seattle’s 1 Percent for Art Program.”

¹⁷ Jones, *Technical Report*, 20.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 16.

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were not considered viable sites for public art. These funds were even more difficult to spend because the county preferred that individual departments' art program funds not be allocated to other departments. The strict County policy led Allen to consider how the Arts Commission could creatively partner with Public Works to produce the symposium and utilize the funds available for a Public Works site.

Meanwhile, King County Arts Commissioner Parks Anderson advocated for the symposium to push the artistic envelope and proposed a theme of "land and the elements" that would consider art related to environmental forces, like wind generation, waterpower, and earth forms.¹⁹ As Allen continued his research with Public Works, he discovered that the County owned over 100 sand and gravel pits that were used as a source of material for road building and other activities. A number of these mining sites were inactive and abandoned by the County without any effort to remediate, or "recontour" them, as was required by the County for inactive, privately-owned mines. Soon the symposium's theme was narrowed to focus on earthwork art as a tool for land reclamation and one of the County's un-reclaimed gravel pits would be used as a pilot project to investigate whether art could be employed as a cost-effective means of reclaiming post-industrial sites. It was a remarkable and timely vision that was attuned to the local problem of abandoned gravel mines; the national Land Art movement; the regional ethos of environmentalism in design; as well as the national focus on the environmental impacts of mining and mine reclamation.

SYMPOSIUM CONTEXT & FUNDING

At the time the symposium was planned, the nominated site was located in rural, unincorporated King County. Views from the site extended across the Kent Valley's agricultural landscape. King County, established in 1852, is Washington's most populous county and home to Seattle, the state's largest city. Between 1960 and 1980 the County's population increased by 9%. Over the same period the population distribution changed dramatically with a shift towards residents moving away from urban areas; Seattle alone saw a population decrease of over 20% while unincorporated areas of the County, like the Kent Valley where the Morris Earthwork is located (The site is in the city of SeaTac which was not incorporated until 1990), grew by over 57%.²⁰ The changing demographics raised concerns at the time about development pressures on rural areas, including the agricultural Kent Valley.

The Washington state legislature sought to ease development pressures on rural areas by passing the 1970 Open Space Act. The Act provided tax breaks to farmers to keep agricultural lands in their current use. Locally, King County responded to perceptions of shifting land use with several initiatives, including a 1977 moratorium on the development of agricultural land for 18 months.²¹

As public measures to preserve the County's farmland proceeded, County officials wrestled with another land use issue: what to do with the abandoned sand and gravel mines that it owned. The County's code exempted county-owned mining sites from being reclaimed, unlike privately-owned mines which were required to be "recontoured" after they were exhausted. Despite the lack of legal requirement, plans were made in 1973 to reclaim 16 of the County's 78 gravel pits.²² Then in 1977, the County Executive proposed a project to reclaim all of the County's abandoned gravel pits, but this project was not adopted due to lack of funds.²³ Although a holistic response to reclaiming County-owned pits was not realized, several pits around this time were individually repurposed as parks or public gardens, and in the case of the Calhoun Pit, as a Fire Department academy. By the time of the 1979 symposium, King County Code 21.42.120, which governed Quarrying and Mining Operations, set a standard for reclaimed mines to have "topography in substantial conformity to the land area immediately surrounding."²⁴ Similar requirements remain in place today.²⁵

¹⁹ Jones, *Technical Report*, 21.

²⁰ Ibid, 13.

²¹ Dean Katz, "Magnuson to Introduce Bill to Save Agricultural Land," *The Seattle Times*, March 3, 1978, 7.

²² Irv Potter to Don Horey, "Gravel Pits," from Irv Potter to Don Horey, September 20, 1973, memorandum, "Earthworks Symposium coordinator records," Series 1742, KC Archives.

²³ Jones, *Technical Report*, 13-14.

²⁴ "1979 Earthworks Symposium, An Overview," Undated. Series 278, KC Archives.

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It was against this local backdrop that the Arts Commission and Department of Public Works reached an agreement to co-sponsor the Earthworks Symposium. Public Works agreed to retain ownership of the Johnson Pit #30 site and allow it to be used for the symposium.²⁶ Additionally, Public Works allocated \$50,000 of its available 1 Percent for Art funds to the project.²⁷ At the time, the Earthworks Symposium was the largest public/private project undertaken by the King County Arts Commission and the largest interagency project that it had initiated.²⁸ The Arts Commission saw reclaiming the gravel pit at the nominated site as a bulwark against encroaching development, "The proposed Earthwork park stands in the path of this industrial threshing machine. Developed as a park site, it could provide some relief in a landscape that will soon be all asphalt and concrete."²⁹

The symposium organizers understood that any earthwork-as-reclamation project had to demonstrate that it was financially achievable and replicable by other projects in other jurisdictions. As such, cost-effectiveness was a priority from the outset. The Arts Commission estimated that the cost of recontouring the site by traditional methods would have been between \$102,000 and \$132,307.³⁰ D.J. Hopkins submitted the lowest bid for constructing Morris' design at \$87,000 and the total construction budget for the earthwork came in at \$121,565, comparing favorably with the traditional approach to reclamation.³¹ Change orders and repairs to the earthwork due to a landslide during construction added to the cost, but on paper at least, the project proved its ability to compete with standard, less artful methods of reclamation.

Despite the 1 Percent for Art funds that Public Works directed to the symposium, substantial fundraising was still necessary to produce the project as planned. The Arts Commission's early application to the National Endowment for the Arts paid off with two grants totaling \$67,000, making it the project's largest funder. They sought additional federal funding from the US Bureau of Mines and received a positive response:

The approach to reclamation described in the Earthworks material you sent me is indeed unique. Using land sculpture to return mined lands to beneficial use is an innovative method of providing urban park land in suburban areas... We would view land sculpture as a reclamation method and potentially would be interested in funding portions of the reclamation design development.³²

The Bureau of Mines awarded a \$35,0000 grant to the symposium through its Mining Research Program with the objective "to establish and document a format for public and private involvement and responsibility in the planning of innovative reclamation and uses for abandoned gravel pits, land fill sites, and rock quarries."³³

²⁵ King County Code 21A.22.081 Reclamation, accessed October 23, 2020, https://www.kingcounty.gov/council/legislation/kc_code/24_30_Title_21A.aspx.

²⁶ Jim Guenther, Department of Public Works to Yankee Johnson, King County Arts Commission, "1979 Earthworks Symposium, Summary of October 5 Meeting," October 6, 1978, memorandum, Series 1742, KC Archives.

²⁷ Jim Guenther, King County Department of Public Works to Yankee Johnson, King County Arts Commission, "Earthwork Symposium," August 7, 1978, memorandum, Series 1742, KC Archives.

²⁸ Cultural Resources Division, "Brief History of the Robert Morris Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)," March 4, 1993, "Project files: Robert Morris earthwork," Series 1747, KC Archives.

²⁹ "1979 Earthworks Symposium, An Overview."

³⁰ Jones, *Technical Report*, 31.

³¹ "Earthworks Project – Income and Expenditures," accounting ledger, undated, Series 278, KC Archives.

³² William N. Fitch, Ph.D., Staff Engineer, Mined Land Reclamation Technology, US Bureau of Mines to Craig Langager, King County Arts Commission, correspondence, November 27, 1978, King County Arts Commission records, Seattle Art Museum Dorothy Stimson Bullitt Library, Seattle, WA.

³³ United States Bureau of Mines and King County Arts Commission, September 28, 1979, contract, Series 278, KC Archives.

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Support from private foundations included the Buckeye Trust (\$48,900), the Jewish Federation (\$5000), and the Weyerhaeuser Foundation (\$1500). Individual artists' designs were also sponsored by University of Washington, Port of Seattle, Seattle Arts Commission, and Lakeside Sand and Gravel Company.

SYMPOSIUM ARTISTS

The symposium was conceived in two parts, Phase I realized the construction of a demonstration piece using a single artist's design to reclaim a County-owned, industrially abused site. Phase II was framed as a speculative forum that invited a small group of artists to design works that reclaimed industrially scarred sites throughout King County. This approach intentionally deviated from the standard symposium format where all the artists created work at the same time at the same site. The organizers wanted to maximize impact by allowing one design to utilize and reclaim an entire site while also showcasing a diversity of approaches through the speculative work of the other artists.³⁴

The symposium's organizers acknowledged that Land Artist Robert Smithson pioneered the idea of deploying art as environmental reclamation and provided a foundation for the symposium's theme.³⁵ Smithson's earthworks proposals for Kennecott Copper, Hanna Coal, and Minerals Engineering had been focused on creating a collaborative relationship between artist and industry.³⁶ However, neither these nor similar proposals to mining companies made by Nancy Holt or Robert Morris were realized prior to the symposium. As Morris noted in his essay *Notes on Art as/and Land Reclamation* (adapted from his keynote address given at the symposium), the idea of an artist working on an industrially abused site was not new, but the symposium was "the first instance of the hiring of an artist to produce art billed as land reclamation."³⁷

Seven artists were selected to present designs for Phase II. The subject sites were chosen by the symposium's project team for both phases and assigned to the artists. The artists were commissioned to produce a proposal in the form of designs, drawings, and a finished maquette that would be displayed at the Seattle Art Museum's Modern Art Pavilion and join a traveling exhibition. The artists were brought to Seattle to take part in public forums and lectures that included landscape architects and members of government and private industry from July 31 – August 18, 1979. Each artists' proposal was sponsored by a public or private agency who could construct the design at a later date if they wished. Sponsors included the Port of Seattle, Lakeside Sand and Gravel Company, Seattle Arts Commission, University of Washington, the Jewish Federation, and the Washington State Arts Commission. The event reinforced the viability of art as a tool for reclaiming abused landscapes with multiple design proposals for damaged sites in the public and private realms, making it easier to see how such designs could be realized.

A three-person jury was named to select the artist for Phase I: Betsy Baker, editor of *Art in America*; Iain Baxter, practicing artist from Vancouver, British Columbia; and Charles Cowles, publisher of *Artforum* and curator of the Seattle Art Museum's Modern Art Pavilion.

The Arts Commission's Visual Arts Committee provided the jury with the project's brief:

The focus of the Symposium will be Earthworks as a land reclamation tool. It is important, therefore, that the proposed work have a substantial impact on the entire site. We would expect considerable topography change. However, the work must leave the site ecologically sound, and must conform to all King County and Washington State regulations governing grade, water drainage, soil composition, foliage, and health and safety standards. The work must be low- or no-maintenance. Parking for ten cars is

³⁴ "1979 Earthworks Symposium, An Overview."

³⁵ "1979 Earthworks Symposium, An Overview."

³⁶ Robert Hobbs, "Earthworks: Past and Present." *Art Journal* 42, no. 3 (1982): 191-194.

³⁷ Robert Morris, "Notes on Art as/and Land Reclamation," *October* 12, (1980): 99.

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contemplated at the site. This may or may not be incorporated as part of the artist's design.³⁸

The jury invited 22 artists of international stature to be considered for inclusion by submitting a statement of intent regarding the symposium's theme of "Land Reclamation as Sculpture."³⁹ Eleven artists responded and were considered by the jury. They were artists Carl Andre, Alice Aycock, Herbert Bayer, Richard Fleischner, Nancy Holt, Robert Irwin, Mary Miss, Robert Morris, Bruce Nauman, Beverly Pepper, and Michelle Stuart.

The jury selected Robert Morris to submit a specific design for the site after reviewing the artists' submissions and visiting the Johnson Pit #30 site in December 1978. Morris was selected in part because of his experience and stature, and the resulting attention he would bring to the project. His previous Land Art projects in Grand Rapids and for *Sonsbeek 71*, qualified him in the jury's eyes to work with the symposium's theme at a site of this scale. Most critically, Morris was selected because the jury felt that he was the most qualified to "challenge the limits of the public notion of sculpture, and so hopefully stimulate real consideration of the possibility of art as land reclamation."⁴⁰

A second jury was assembled to select the artists for Phase II. An open invitation to artists to express interest in the project was publicized through the national network of museums and arts organizations. The Arts Commission's national call for entries elevated the symposium's profile and placed it within the national scope of the Land Art and environmental movements. Six artists were selected to participate: Richard Fleischner, Mary Miss, Beverly Pepper, Dennis Oppenheim, Iain Baxter, and Lawrence Hanson.

Richard Fleischner was assigned a sand and gravel pit in Issaquah owned by Lakeside Sand and Gravel, the only privately-owned site considered for the symposium. Mary Miss was assigned the Airport Free-Zone, strips of land adjacent to the Seattle-Tacoma Airport where the houses had previously been purchased and removed by the Port of Seattle. Beverly Pepper was assigned the Montlake Landfill, an 80-acre site next to Lake Washington. Dennis Oppenheim was assigned an abandoned airstrip at the old Sand Point Naval Air Station in Seattle. Iain Baxter was assigned a County-owned sand and gravel pit near Carnation, WA that had been exhausted. Lawrence Hanson was assigned a surplus County-owned sand and gravel pit east of Snoqualmie, WA.⁴¹ None of these designs were executed on the ground.

However, Herbert Bayer who was assigned Mill Creek Canyon, a natural area in Kent, WA prone to erosion and flooding was built, albeit after the symposium was over. Isabel Hogan, the mayor of Kent, served on the symposium's board of advisors while the 100-acre Mill Creek Canyon property in her town was experiencing heavy erosion problems due to nearby residential development. Engineering work to solve the flooding problem was underway when the city asked the Earthworks symposium's Phase I jury to suggest an artist who could consult on the project.⁴² Herbert Bayer, the Bauhaus-trained artist was contacted and his proposal for the park—later built in 1982 – was included in Phase II of the symposium.

In total, four gravel pits were featured by the symposium. By illustrating a variety of designs for reclaiming a single type of abused site, the symposium expanded its impact by allowing public and private agencies both locally and nationally to envision a range of solutions more easily. Additionally, four artists were assigned sites concerned with "social reclamation," thus expanding the premise that art is a viable and effective tool for creating meaningful public space out of otherwise challenging post-industrial landscapes. The symposium's traveling exhibition delivered this message to a total of thirteen museums, galleries, and universities across the country from 1981-1983.⁴³ This included: San Jose

³⁸ Morris, "Notes on Art", 99.

³⁹ Jones, *Technical Report*, 33.

⁴⁰ Jones, *Technical Report*, 34.

⁴¹ Barbara Noah, "Cost-effective Earth Art," *Art in America* 68, (1980): 12.

⁴² Roger Downey, "Earthworks Get Off the Ground," *The Weekly*, January 10-17, 1979, 18, Series 278, KC Archives.

⁴³ "Earthworks: Land Reclamation as Sculpture," exhibition catalog, Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, WA, 1979.

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Museum of Art, California; Santa Barbara Museum of Art, California; Phoenix Museum of Art, Arizona; Amarillo Art Museum, Texas; Tyler Museum of Art, Texas; The Winnipeg Art Gallery, Manitoba; University of Iowa Museum of Art, Iowa; South Dakota Memorial Arts Center, South Dakota; Springfield Art Museum, Missouri; The Center for Visual Arts Gallery, Illinois; the J.B. Speed Art Museum, Kentucky; and The Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio.

Phase II of the symposium ran from July 31 – August 18, 1979, and featured panels with the artists, government and private industry representatives, landscape architects, and environmentalists; artist presentations; addresses by Morris and the National Endowment for the Arts' Media Arts Program Director; and the opening of an exhibit of the artists' models and drawings at the Seattle Art Museum's Modern Art Pavilion. The University of Washington's School of Art presented a graduate seminar on environmental art during the Symposium and provided the artists with studio space.⁴⁴

As part of his role in the symposium, Morris delivered the keynote address. In it he contextualized the Land Art movement, offered insight on public art, and raised important questions regarding the role artists played – conceptually, practically, and morally – by their employment in a public reclamation process. This address was the basis for Morris' subsequent writing published in the journal *October* in 1980 and later republished in Morris' book *Continuous Project Altered Daily* in 1993. The questions raised by Morris in the address would be referenced throughout discourse on Land Art for decades to follow including most major writings on the subject, including *Earthworks and Beyond* by John Beardsley; *Land and Environmental Art* edited by Jeffrey Kastner and Brian Wells; *Between Landscape Architecture and Land Art* by Udo Weilacher. Related fields reference Morris' address as well, such as the US Geologic Survey report, "The Human Factor in Mining Reclamation" published in 2000.⁴⁵

SITE HISTORY AND SELECTION

The future site of *Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)* was platted by John Winston in 1905 and sold two years later to King County for \$500 for use as a gravel pit.⁴⁶ By 1913 the County began construction on a new road that terminated at the east end of the site. The proximity of the new road, William A Johnson Road #1433, may have resulted in its name becoming associated with the site, the 30th entry on King County's master list of sand and gravel mines, hence the name Johnson Pit #30.⁴⁷ Maps and historical photos indicate that the mine operation occupied the lower area of the site on the east side. Johnson Pit #30 was in disuse as a gravel pit by the 1940s although its last use was in 1971 when debris from the nearby reconstruction of South 216th Street was dumped there.⁴⁸ A 1973 King County Department of Public Works accounting of County-owned gravel pits stated that the Johnson Pit #30 was "on the list to be surplus" and by the time the pit was selected for the Earthworks Symposium it had been formally designated as such.⁴⁹

The Arts Commission's criteria for selecting the symposium's Phase I project site prioritized three attributes:

1. That the site be of a manageable size; that is, a site that would be large enough to have a strong visual impact, yet small enough to realistically be capable of reclamation within the project budget.
2. That the site be accessible to the general public – near population centers rather than in remoter areas.

⁴⁴ Jones, *Technical Report*, 22.

⁴⁵ Belinda F. Abrogast, et al, *The Human Factor in Mining Reclamation; US Geological Survey Circular 1191*, Denver: US Geological Survey, (2000).

⁴⁶ King County Archives, "King County Earthworks: Land Reclamation as Sculpture, online exhibit, 2013, accessed October 16, 2020, <https://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/records-licensing/archives/exhibits/earthworks.aspx>.

⁴⁷ Chris Loutsis, Manager, Real Property Division to D.R. Horey, King County Road Engineer, "Idle Gravel Pits in King County," May 9, 1978, memorandum, Series 1742, KC Archives.

⁴⁸ "King County Earthworks," online exhibit, 2013.

⁴⁹ Irv Potter to Don Horey, King County Road Engineer, "Current Status of King County Gravel Pit Sites and Potential Sites," September 18, 1973, memorandum, Series 1742, King County Archives, Seattle, WA.

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3. That the site have some inherent attractiveness of its own, one that would provide an appropriate setting for a work of art.⁵⁰

The Arts Commission identified the County's abandoned gravel pits as ideal demonstration sites to explore the symposium's theme of "land reclamation as sculpture." Working with the Department of Public Works, the two agencies began narrowing down the list of sites and by August 1978 Johnson Pit #30 was a lead contender.⁵¹

The Department of Public Works owned the site and would contribute \$57,000 of its available 1 Percent for Art funds to the project. Discussions between the Arts Commission and the manager of the Parks Division took place at the same time regarding the possible transfer of the site to Parks. There were no legal restrictions preventing a transfer but there was a concern that the site might be sold before the project got off the ground since it was listed as surplus.⁵² By October 1978, Public Works agreed to retain ownership of the property and allow it to be used as the symposium's Phase 1 demonstration site the following year.⁵³ At that point, the site was taken off the list of surplus County property.⁵⁴ Public Works left open the possibility of transferring the site to the Parks Division or the City of Kent after the symposium concluded. However, neither transfer occurred.

Craig Langager, the Arts Commission's Visual Projects Manager and lead coordinator for the Earthworks Symposium, began working with King County departments to develop a collaborative project team to manage the earthwork's construction. Greg Skinner was hired by the Arts Commission as a Project Technical Assistant to help Langager. Sandy Adams and Larry Gibbons were the primary project representatives for Public Works. Bill Huxford and Steve Massey from the County's Architecture Division served as project managers. Pacific Testing Laboratories was enlisted for construction inspection and testing.

Despite the Parks Division's involvement in the project's early planning, the department did not play a significant role in the development of the Morris Earthwork or any of the symposium projects. Notably, the site of the Morris Earthwork is still not designated by the County as a park; it is a work of public art stewarded by 4Culture, a public development authority and the successor to the King County Arts Commission.

Construction of Morris' design began in August 1979 and coincided with the symposium's programming for Phase II. The Morris Earthwork was not completed until December 1979 and was not unveiled during the course of the symposium's programming.

REACTION TO THE SYMPOSIUM

The Earthworks Symposium proposed a novel collaboration between artists and landowners to achieve a new model for site reclamation. The successful construction of the Morris Earthwork challenged public and private industry to move beyond legally mandated reclamation efforts in favor of using artist-driven solutions for site reclamation and stewardship. At the time of the symposium, *Artweek* noted that "It's difficult to imagine a more satisfying marriage of art and the common social good."⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Jones, *Technical Report*, 31.

⁵¹ Jim Guenther, King County Department of Public Works to Yankee Johnson, King County Arts Commission, "Earthwork Symposium," August 7, 1978, memorandum, Series 1742, KC Archives.

⁵² Yankee Johnson, King County Arts Commission to Jim Webster, Manager, Parks Division, "Site for Sculpture Symposium," July 31, 1978, memorandum, Series 1742, KC Archives.

⁵³ Jim Guenther, Department of Public Works to Yankee Johnson, King County Arts Commission, "1979 Earthworks Symposium, Summary of October 5 Meeting," October 6, 1978, memorandum, Series 1742, KC Archives.

⁵⁴ Donald R. Horey, County Road Engineer to Chris Loutsis, Real Property Division, "Pit No. 30 (Johnson Pit)," October 6, 1978, Series 1742, KC Archives.

⁵⁵ Steven Winn, *Earth-Shaping Events*, *ARTnews* 78, (1979): 136.

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Anticipation of the symposium in the national arts and landscape architecture press expressed excitement and cautious optimism over its ambitious premise. The symposium was described by *Artforum* as “a project of major public dimensions” and “the most ambitious Earthwork project this country has ever seen.”⁵⁶ *Artweek* acknowledged the symposium’s national implications, “Over the next year, the rest of the country should look closely at the processes of change in Seattle’s blighted landscape.”⁵⁷ *Art Journal* called the symposium a significant development in the realization of reclamation as art.⁵⁸ The *Seattle Times* art critic, reporting on plans for the symposium concluded, “An earthwork park could provide relief in the landscape, and mark the Northwest as an arts innovator. Nothing is more probable than this idea, if it is half as successful financially and esthetically as it deserves to be, will be copied in other parts of the country.”⁵⁹ Echoing this sense of possibility, Grady Clay, the editor of *Landscape Architecture Magazine* wrote that “...the Earthworks Symposium in Seattle shows early promise of becoming one of the most influential art shows of this century. We hope it lives up to its promise.”⁶⁰

However, reception among the landscape architecture community immediately following the exhibition was mixed. Grady Clay and Richard Haag both participated in a panel discussion at the symposium alongside selected artists that became openly contentious as each discipline staked their claim to the practice of reclamation.⁶¹ By 1980, Clay provided more measured support of the opportunities afforded by the event. “Even if this remarkable set of events does not inspire the nation’s sand and gravel companies and its coal and mineral miners to create works of art from their own holdings, it is unique in pointing to the possibilities...As a matter of history, this could be quite a turning point, for earthworks artists and landscape architects had been going their own separate ways for decades.”⁶²

Although land artists and landscape architects each thought that they were best suited to address issues of site reclamation, they acknowledged each other’s contributions to the field. Ina Bray, chairwoman of the Arts Commission, wrote to the President of the Washington Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects (WASLA), “During the active phase of the symposium a number of landscape architects provided indispensable assistance, both as participants in discussion and by providing design help. Two issues became clear: that the line between the work of earth artists and landscape architects is far from clear; and that earthwork art requires the technical guidance of both landscape architects and engineers. We hope that the particular vision of the artists who participated was also valuable to members of the landscape architect’s profession.”⁶³ For their part, WASLA awarded the 1979 Civic Award to the King County Arts Commission and the Department of Public Works for the Earthworks Symposium.

DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

Morris described the design in his proposal to the Arts Commission:

The work consists of a series of descending concentric slopes and benches located in the central part of the site. A hill-form rises on the lower third of the site. A parking lot is located at the top of the site. The entire site, graded and ungraded areas, is to be cleared of trees and planted in rye grass.

I have employed a method of terracing which has been used in ancient times as well as the present. Such a method has produced sites of such widely varying context and purpose as

⁵⁶ Nancy Foote, “Monument-sculpture-earthwork,” *Artforum International*, 18 (1979): 32-37.

⁵⁷ Judith L. Dunham, “Artists Reclaim the Land: Seattle Art Museum’s Modern Art Pavilion,” *Artweek*, Vol. 10, 1979:1.

⁵⁸ Hobbs, “Earthworks: Past and Present,” 194.

⁵⁹ Deloris Tarzan, “Earthworks are good economics,” *The Seattle Times*, October 17, 1978, 8.

⁶⁰ Grady Clay, “Earthworks in Seattle: Reclamation as a Fine Art,” *Landscape Architecture Magazine*, May 1979, 291.

⁶¹ Mayumi Tsutakawa, “Who Shall Define Earthworks?” *The Seattle Daily Times*, August 15, 1979, E13.

⁶² Clay, Grady, “Earthworks Move Upstage,” *Landscape Architecture Magazine*, January 1980, 55.

⁶³ Ina Bray, King County Arts Commission to Richard A. Carothers, Washington Chapter, American Society of Landscape Architects, correspondence, King County Arts Commission records, Seattle Art Museum Dorothy Stimson Bullitt Library, Seattle, WA.

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palaces and strip mines, highway embankments and mountain side cultivation. Persian and Mogul gardens were terraced as were the vast amphitheaters of Muyu-uray in Peru. Entire mountains in China have been terraced for erosion control and agriculture. The terrace is basically a cut and fill operation. The earth is removed in one place and piled in another. This is the prototypical act in shaping the earth – i.e., digging a hole and piling up the earth beside it. But such an innocent and practical act immediately reverberates to the point of excess with symbollic (sic) overtones, calling up sexual duality, funerary monuments, and the first temple hearths and altars. The act of digging and piling carried out in an organized way and at an intensified scale has produced sunken gardens and ziggurats on the one hand and gigantic geographical scars and ore tailings on the other. The forms are basically the same. The purposes and details vary, labeling one construction sublime, another abysmal.

Living as I do in an age deprived of the gods and numbed by the ironically entropic consequences of our own technology, my work can hardly be construed as celebrating either the transcendent or the industrial. But as this work is publically (sic) funded, people whose tax dollars went toward its construction will demand to know how, failing the act of celebration, the work justifies the expenditure of the money and effort. Some of them will at least want to know what it 'means.' To this I can only reply that the distinctive difference of art, what marks it off from all other organized human activity, is that it does not seek control through explanation. That it offers the freedom to experience and question is not an opportunity that its audience always welcomes. But the value of the present work, if any, will have to be sought on these terms.⁶⁴

Morris submitted his design to the Arts Commission in April 1979. The Arts Commission applied for a grading permit in early May based on final site drawings donated by Seattle-based landscape architecture firm Jones & Jones.⁶⁵ The County awarded the construction contract to the D.J. Hopkins Company and issued a notice to proceed for August 2, 1979. Morris' design called for 15,453 cubic yards of earth to be cut and reused on site to construct the terraces and mound. He specified that the 1575 cubic yards of anticipated-excess earth be sold to a nearby site.⁶⁶ Clearing and grubbing began the following week.⁶⁷

By the end of August, a problem was discovered along the site's east and southeast sides. As constructed, the toe of the slope was too close to an asphalt ditch running along 40th Place South.⁶⁸ Morris' original plans called for an embankment slope of approximately 2 horizontal-feet to 1 vertical-feet (2:1) in order to meet the County's requirement for a 5'-wide distance, or bench, between the toe of the slope and the road ditch. However, the County's Hydraulics department had revised the grading plan and specified the slope to be constructed at 1:1. Pacific Technologies was brought in to assess the situation and confirmed that the finished 1:1 slope was steeper than the fill material's natural angle of repose and that raveling would likely occur.⁶⁹ The project's first change order was issued, and Morris redesigned a portion of the slope back to his original 1.75:1 grade.⁷⁰

⁶⁴ Robert Morris, "Proposal for the Site at Johnson Pit No. 30," 1979, Series 278, King County Archives, Seattle, WA.

⁶⁵ King County Arts Commission, "Visual Arts Committee Meeting, Symposium Up-Date," May 3, 1979, meeting notes, Series 278, KC Archives.

⁶⁶ Morris, "Proposal for the Site at Johnson Pit No. 30."

⁶⁷ A. Richard Gemperle, Manager, King County Architecture Division to D.J. Hopkins Co., Inc., "Notice to Proceed", July 31, 1979, Series 278, KC Archives.

⁶⁸ Jones, *Technical Report*, 44.

⁶⁹ George F. Huckaby, President, Pacific Testing Laboratories to Greg Skinner, King County Architecture Division, August 30, 1979, "Johnson Pit #30," Series 278, KC Archives.

⁷⁰ King County, Washington, Contract Change Order No. 1, Contract C09117C with D.J. Hopkins Co., Inc., "Johnson Pit #30 – Earthworks", September 10, 1979, Series 278, KC Archives.

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The discrepancy caused suspicion that the County survey was in error and needed to be confirmed. The County's Chief Surveyor verified that the survey base lines and elevations were correct and that no discrepancy between the survey and the construction was evident.⁷¹ In his Construction Report for the week of September 4-7, Morris wrote that, "As Hydraulics had insisted on two benches, the slopes have been steepened... That is, these benches imposed on my design (which had maintained a fairly consistent 1.8:1 for a section along the lower slope resulted in the unacceptable steepness... I agreed to redesign the lower portion below 130 by (a) reducing the hill and (b) including one bench approximately 25' below top grade (thereby fulfilling County guidelines of having a bench for every 25' of drop in a grade)."⁷²

Questions about the County's survey and the construction of the design surfaced again in October. The artwork was designed to be excavated to 100' at its lowest elevation but the water table was struck at 101.5'. The contractor formally notified the County that he had no confidence in the drainage design in the central depression and that "when it washes out it will be your responsibility."⁷³ Four days later Pacific Testing evaluated the site grading and reported that the slope along the southeast was graded more steeply than what they had recommended at the end of August.⁷⁴ Similarly, the east-west slope running along the north edge of the site was also steeper than suggested. The engineers reported that the stability of the slopes would be compromised by rain and frost if they were not retained. The hazard potential for the southeast slope included the release of soil and gravel into the road, impacting traffic. The north slope, besides potentially failing, could also slough onto the neighboring private land. Pacific Testing Laboratories suggested a number of containment solutions and in the end the Arts Commission settled on re-grading the north slope and erecting a perimeter chain-link fence to protect against falling rock.⁷⁵

It was determined that the parking lot required regrading in order to provide enough cover for a new 18" culvert running under it that was exposed as a result of alignment that deviated from Morris' original design. The parking lot grading, drainage revisions, and perimeter fence each resulted in a separate change order, bringing the total cost increase across four change orders to \$16,185.30, or 18% of the original \$87,000 contract.

In a terse letter to the Department of Public Works, Jerry Allen from the Arts Commission pointed out that both the grading and drainage problems were the result of the site survey and drainage plan provided by Public Works, and that as the site's owner, the department would be responsible for maintaining the site after construction.⁷⁶

In response, Larry Gibbons of Public Works critiqued the design and implementation of the grading plan in a memorandum to his colleague Sandy Adams. He observed that many of the project's problems could have been avoided if one person was responsible for the design and coordination and that insufficient time had been allocated for the design phase.⁷⁷ Yankee Johnson, executive director of the King County Arts Commission, acknowledged as much in his introduction to the symposium's catalog when he wrote that "a governmental arts agency is not at its best in project development and management and should act as a body of last resort."⁷⁸

⁷¹ Paul W. Taisey, King County Chief Surveyor to Craig Langager, King County Arts Commission, "Earthwork Site at South 216th," September 5, 1979, memorandum, Series 278, KC Archives.

⁷² Jones, *Technical Report*, 50.

⁷³ David J. Hopkins, D.J. Hopkins Co., Inc. to William D. Huxford, King County Architecture Division, "Johnson Pit #30," October 4, 1979, Series 278, KC Archives.

⁷⁴ George E. Huckaby, Pacific Testing Laboratories to Bill Huxford, King County Architecture Division, "Earthworks Project, Johnson Pit No. 30," October 9, 1979, Series 278, KC Archives.

⁷⁵ Jerry Allen, King County Arts Commission to John Logan, Larry Gibbons, Sandy Adams, Public Works Department, ADM., "Meeting regarding slopes and drainage, Johnson Pit #30," October 12, 1979, memorandum, Series 278, KC Archives.

⁷⁶ Jerry Allen, King County Arts Commission to Rex Knight, Department of Public Works, "Hydraulics and slopes at Johnson Pit #30," October 10, 1979, memorandum, Series 278, KC Archives.

⁷⁷ Larry Gibbons, Department of Public Works to Sandy Adams, Department of Public Works, "Johnson Pit #30," October 22, 1979, memorandum, Series 278, KC Archives.

⁷⁸ Yankee Johnson, "Earthworks: Combining Environmental and Land Issues," in *Earthworks: Land Reclamation as Sculpture*, 1979, 3,

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Morris' design called for the site to be covered in rye grass, a long grass that would be mowed twice annually. Hydroseeding was included as one of the bid alternates in the contract with D.J. Hopkins but did not occur until the second week of November, too late for the grass to become established before winter. Gibbons pointed out in his October 22 memo to Adams that seeded grass wouldn't be established until Spring 1980 since the project started so late in the year. Without the benefit of a vegetative cover, he noted that erosion was likely and would require additional maintenance.

Adams was correct. A November 1 site inspection attended by the project team's leads from the Arts Commission, Architecture Division, and Pacific Testing noted excessive erosion at two of the benches, below the parking lot, and along the entrance road as well as slope failure along the northeast property line embankment slope.⁷⁹ The worst failure was yet to come. After a period of record rains, the southeast slope failed and spilled into the road. Jerry Allen from the Arts Commission visited the site on December 17 with Steve Massey and Bill Huxford, the project managers from the Architecture Division. Allen noted that failure had been anticipated here and requested assistance from Public Works:

I understand that severe weather has created demands for your men and equipment all over the County. However, because of the high publicity that surrounds this project, any steps that can be taken by your department to minimize the erosion and slope failure will reduce the adverse public relations impact on the project, as well as protect the earthwork.⁸⁰

The contractor David Hopkins wrote to Huxford a few days later. He noted that the project was complete as designed and disavowed responsibility for maintenance of eroded slopes or related maintenance of drainage systems, "We are seriously concerned over the reaction (sic) time of the County to the severe erosion and subsequent damage which started on 12-15-79 to the East major fill. Nothing has been done by the County to clean up the mess as of 12-19-79. The possibility of accelerated damage and liability exposure increases daily."⁸¹ Handwritten notes on Larry Gibbons's field inspection report to Sandy Adams one month later also note a serious problem at the entrance road and parking lot, "Road entrance is undermined and approx. 8 to 10" of asphalt is hanging out in space w/ no base on E. side."⁸²

The County mitigated the impact of additional landslides by covering a portion of the hillside with matting and placing sandbags at the toe of the slope near the road.⁸³ Repairing the damage to the earthwork took longer to complete. By the end of January 1980, the Arts Commission and Department of Public Works (DPW) agreed to develop a plan and cost estimate for completing the repairs by May 30 but the effort was delayed until late summer.⁸⁴ Although the earthwork's construction was completed by the end of the year, finishing touches to the parking lot (striping, installation of wheel stops) was delayed by weather. The Architecture Division did not make final acceptance of the original construction by D.J. Hopkins Co. until May 23, 1980.⁸⁵

symposium program.

⁷⁹ Bill Huxford, King County Architecture Division to D.J. Hopkins Co., Inc., "Site Visit & Inspection, Johnson Pit #30, October 31, 1979," November 1, 1979, Series 278, KC Archives.

⁸⁰ Jerry Allen, King County Arts Commission to Sandy Adams, Department of Public Works, "Johnson Pit #30," December 17, 1979, memorandum, Series 278, KC Archives.

⁸¹ David J. Hopkins, D.J. Hopkins Co., Inc. to William D. Huxford, King County Architecture Division, "Johnson Pit #30," December 19, 1979, Series 278, KC Archives.

⁸² Larry Gibbons, Department of Public Works to Sandy Adams, Department of Public Works, "Johnson Pit – Earthwork Project," January 18, 1980, memorandum, Series 278, KC Archives.

⁸³ Jim McAuliff, Department of Public Works to Sandy Adams, Department of Public Works, "Slide on 216th Avenue South Near 42nd Avenue South," January 16, 1980, memorandum, Series 278, KC Archives.

⁸⁴ Jerry Allen to Sandy Adams, Public Works, "Meeting of January 31, 1980 – Summary," February 4, 1979, memorandum, Series 1742, KC Archives.

⁸⁵ A. Richard Gemperle, Manager, King County Architecture Division to D.J. Hopkins Co., Inc., "Notice of Final Acceptance," May 23, 1980, Series 278, KC Archives.

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In August, DPW provided the Arts Commission with a plan to repair the earthwork at a cost of \$129,888.38. Jerry Allen considered the plan to be “over-designed” and well beyond the Arts Commission’s \$27,000 budget.⁸⁶ The plans were scaled back and the site was repaired by R.H. Scott Construction Company of Renton, WA for \$27,679.16. The work was completed on September 24, 1980, and accepted by the County one month later.⁸⁷

PARKING LOT REVISIONS

The site’s parking lot became an area of concern not long after construction was completed. People loitered in cars and threw their trash on the ground. Public Works, responsible for the site’s maintenance, proposed fencing the parking lot off to cars and placing cast-concrete benches inside for public use.⁸⁸ Visitors would be expected to park along the road shoulder. The plan was not realized but trash and vandalism remained serious management issues. Responding to community complaints about late-night parties, tire dumping, and vandalism at the site, in 1984 the County Council passed Ordinance 6908 defining illegal activity at the earthwork as drinking, littering, setting fires, and driving vehicles on the earthwork.⁸⁹ In addition, the Council allocated \$15,000 to the Arts Commission to establish a maintenance plan and address vandalism. The Arts Commission used a portion of the funds to contract with South King County Activity Center (SKCAC), a non-profit agency that provided work for developmentally disabled adults, to perform routine maintenance at the site. They also contracted with Seattle-based landscape architect Barbara Swift to address the root of the problem with a design-based approach. The Commission framed the problem and the desired solution:

The parking area is a pad of asphalt poured without care or design... The problem of on-going cleanup and maintenance has been identified as centering on the parking lot configuration. The lot as it is designed invites individuals to sit in cars (facing across the earthwork toward the Kent Valley), drink and eat, throw cans, bottles, and other trash into the pit. Redesign of the parking lot to force people to get out of their cars and walk around a buffer of some kind in order to view the earthwork should help solve the problem.⁹⁰

Swift proposed integrating the parking lot with the site through grading and improving the entry experience for pedestrians.⁹¹ A vegetative buffer between the lot and the earthwork was planned to encourage visitors to leave their cars and enter the site. She proposed regrading areas to the west and east of the lot to provide viewpoints and apply a level of design to the parking lot that was consistent with the earthwork. Lighting and signage were planned along with a reduction to the lot’s capacity from nine cars down to five. An additional zig-zag pedestrian entrance was added at the lot’s southern end and a strong, aesthetically compatible trash container was designed. Morris was consulted and approved Swift’s plan; he particularly liked the idea of using a vegetative screen to compel people to enter the site.⁹²

Ultimately, the parking lot was reconfigured, but the grading for the overlook and planting plan were not implemented.⁹³ Bollards were added to the north and west of the lot and a pedestal was designed to hold a model of the site for the visually impaired, although there is no evidence that the pedestal or model were installed.⁹⁴ New

⁸⁶ Jerry Allen, King County Arts Commission to Stu McVeigh, Department of Public Works, “Repair Estimates for Johnson Pit #30,” August 12, 1980, memorandum, Series 278, KC Archives.

⁸⁷ King County to R.W. Scott Construction Company, “Notice of Final Acceptance, Improvements to Johnson Pit No. 30,” October 22, 1980, Series 278, KC Archives.

⁸⁸ O.J. Saltarelli, Facilities Manager to Jerry Adams, “Earthworks Park (Johnson Pit #30),” October 8, 1981, memorandum, Series 1742, KC Archives.

⁸⁹ King County Ordinance 6908, August 6, 1984, accessed May 15, 2021, https://kingcounty.gov/council/clerk/search_archive.aspx.

⁹⁰ Mickey Gustin, King County Arts Commission, “Information Memo on Enhancement Project, Robert Morris Earthwork Site Parking Area,” January 12, 1984, Series 1742, KC Archives.

⁹¹ Barbara Swift, “Preliminary Design Report, Robert Morris Earthwork Parking Lot/Overlook Site Project,” June 1984, Series 1747, KC Archives.

⁹² “Call from Bob Morris re Swift Proposal,” August 3, 1984, notes, Series 1747, KC Archives.

⁹³ Barbara Swift, email to authors, November 9, 2020.

⁹⁴ King County, Washington, Contract Change Order to contract P00704P with Barbara Swift, “Earthwork Parking Lot,” July 25, 1985,

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signage was added including an entrance sign crafted from the blade of a bulldozer and a sign that stated the site's hours and that it was illegal to mistreat the earthwork, in accordance with the new County ordinance. Diane Johnston, Visual Arts Coordinator for the Arts Commission, observed that, "The results of this maintenance effort have been positive. Many people have remarked on how much nicer it is to go there now and on how many more people are visiting the site. The community in general may still not have learned to love the Morris Earthwork but at least it is no longer such an attractive nuisance to the rowdier portions of the populace."⁹⁵

SITE REHABILITATION

Despite physical improvements and regular maintenance, the site continued to suffer abuse from visitors in the form of dumping, littering, and erosion due to unscripted circulation. The site's novelty as a piece of art and not a park confounded many residents who compared it unfavorably to Herbert Bayer's design for Earthwork Park in nearby Kent, another product of the 1979 Earthwork Symposium. Their complaints regarding the Arts Commission's lack of public involvement in the planning process and their perception of the artwork as a magnet for bad behavior were heard by the Arts Commission and Paul Barden, the County Council member whose district included the earthwork.⁹⁶

In 1989, a conceptual budget was developed for rehabilitating the site. The \$52,249 cost included resurfacing the parking lot, planting an arboreal screen, reseeding the basin's slopes, and replacing the rotting tree stumps with concrete versions.⁹⁷ The request was considered discretionary and was not funded by the County Council.

A member of SeaTac's Planning Commission contacted the Arts Commission in early 1992 to express dismay over the earthwork's condition. Together, the City of SeaTac and the Arts Commission came up with a series of actions to "improve" the site in a way that was believed would not negatively impact Morris' design. The proposed work included adding additional lighting, planting wildflowers, planting trees along the roadway, and removing the stumps as they naturally decayed. During the County's budget process for 1993, several County Council members expressed concern over the site's ongoing stewardship and directed the Arts Commission to study alternatives for the earthwork, including its sale or outright destruction. At the same time, the Council slashed the Arts Commission's Artwork Maintenance Budget, preventing any of the proposed improvements from being carried out.

The Arts Commission convened an Earthwork Study Group to produce recommendations for the site's future. The group was comprised of members of the King County, SeaTac, and Kent Arts Commissions; a neighbor of the earthwork; a curator from the Seattle Art Museum; Craig Langager, the original project manager; landscape architect Peg Ferm; and County staff. The group produced the 1993 plan, "Robert Morris Earthwork Study Findings and Recommendations." The study recommended retaining the earthwork and investing further in its maintenance and security. Having fulfilled the condition of the Council's budget proviso, the Arts Commission included a budget request for \$28,000 in the "1994 Percent for Arts Annual Plan" to fund the Earthwork Study's Phase I actions that required immediate action.⁹⁸

The Council unanimously approved the proposed "Percent for Art Annual Plan" but included a new budget proviso that the Arts Commission "cease all earthwork stabilization expenditures" until the Council reviewed and approved the Earthwork Study and visited the earthwork in person.⁹⁹

Series 1747, KC Archives.

⁹⁵ Diane Johnston, King County Arts Commission, "Information on the Robert Morris Earthwork at Kent, Washington," no date, report, Series 1747, KC Archives.

⁹⁶ "Notes on Community Meeting of Morris Earthwork Neighbors," August 16, 1984, Series 1747, KC Archives.

⁹⁷ Robert Randlett to Agnes Govern, "Robert Morris EW CIP/CX Clarification II," August 14, 1989, Series 1747, KC Archives.

⁹⁸ 1% for Art Committee, King County Arts Commission, "1994 Percent for Art Annual Plan," Revised December 6, 1993, Series 1747, KC Archives.

⁹⁹ King County Council, Motion No. 9225, "A Motion approving the 1994 1% for Art Project Plan," January 28, 1994, Series 1747, KC Archives.

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The Arts Commission, chastened by the Council's second proviso, met with Councilman Paul Barden to discuss the earthwork in March 1994. In materials prepared for the meeting, the Commission acknowledged that, "As the Arts Commission moves forward with its evaluation of the Robert Morris Earthwork, it will be mindful of its responsibility to the local community, will remain open to the concerns of the public, and will continue to weigh the merit of the artwork from a variety of perspectives."¹⁰⁰

Having satisfied the conditions of the Council's second proviso, the 1995 County budget was approved with a \$52,327 for stabilization of the earthwork as a Percent for Art project.¹⁰¹ The Arts Commission proposed a master plan that was divided into two categories: maintenance and enhancement. Major maintenance items included improving drainage at the bottom of the basin where cattails and red alder were becoming established, replacing the tree stumps, removing brush, and restoring the turf.¹⁰² The enhancements were planned in consultation with Morris who flew to Seattle from his home in New York to visit the site in May 1995. The primary enhancement was intended to address erosion and improve accessibility by formalizing the site's circulation with the addition of a trail and stairs. Additional priorities included creating seating and refreshing the site's signage, including new interpretive signage.

In advance of Morris' visit, the Arts Commission developed a concept to remove the fence between the parking lot and the earthwork so that visitors would have an unobstructed view from their parked cars. A terraced seating area below the parking lot was planned with additional benches placed around the earthwork's perimeter.¹⁰³

Morris vetoed placing benches around the perimeter believing they would be visually disruptive but agreed to a single bench below the parking lot. He envisioned a large log with a flattened top for visitors to sit on. Like the stumps, it would refer to the large trees that were once on the site.¹⁰⁴ His final design was less a sculpted log than a minimalist bench: an 8' long, backless, oak bench on steel posts that was fabricated by Mark Fessler of Seattle and installed in 1997.¹⁰⁵ Bucking the Arts Commission's plan for removing the parking lot fence, Morris doubled down on the unrealized plan from 1984 to encourage viewers to leave their cars and enter the site, but not by means of a vegetative screen. His proposal hearkened back to Department of Public Work's desire to fence off the parking lot to cars:

I think that the parking lot should approach the form of an enclosed cage—lots of chain link fencing 6' high all around the perimeter. Put steel ballards (sic) in front of the fencing to protect cars against getting too close. Have only one zig-zag entry to the site at the NE end that opens onto the trail. I want the contrast between metallic enclosure and open site to be emphasized here. I think this will also serve to encourage people to get out of their cars and move onto the site (i.e., don't make the view very good from the parking lot—obstruct it with fence).¹⁰⁶

Neither the Arts Commission's nor Morris' proposal for the parking lot fence were implemented.

¹⁰⁰ King County Cultural Resources Division, "Robert Morris Earthwork Maintenance Program," March 4, 1993, Series 1747, KC Archives.

¹⁰¹ King County Ordinance 11578, November 21, 1994, accessed November 27, 2020, https://kingcounty.gov/council/clerk/search_archive.aspx.

¹⁰² Helen Lessick to Leonard Garfield and Cath Brunner, King County Arts Commission "earthwork progress," May 30, 1995, memorandum, Series 1747, KC Archives.

¹⁰³ Kristina Gonzales Olson, King County Arts Commission to Stephanie Warden, King County Council Staff, "Earthwork Enhancements," November 9, 1994, memorandum, Series 1747, KC Archives.

¹⁰⁴ Robert Morris to Cath Brunner, King County Arts Commission, June 17, 1995, correspondence, Series 1747, KC Archives.

¹⁰⁵ King County Purchase Order #R18962R for Mark Fessler, December 11, 1996, Series 1747, KC Archives.

¹⁰⁶ Robert Morris to Helen Lessick and Cath Brunner, King County Arts Commission, correspondence, September 9, 1995, Series 1747, KC Archives.

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Landscape architect Peg Ferm designed a perimeter trail and stairs to define a path for visitors and minimize erosion from unscripted access around the earthwork. Her plan to improve drainage at the bottom of the basin was designed to minimize the volunteer growth that favored the wetland conditions. Morris reviewed Ferm's report and preliminary designs for the changes in September 1995 and replied, "Peg's report is meticulous and thorough. It covers everything we discussed when I was there with respect of bringing back the site to acceptable standards and making improvements to enhance access. I find nothing to disagree with in this report."¹⁰⁷

One of the Arts Commission's key objectives for the rehabilitation was to make the site more accessible to the public and lessen its perceived lack of approachability. They were aware that the site could not be made fully ADA accessible without compromising Morris' design or incurring significant expense, nor were they required to. The trail construction design was reviewed by the County's Risk Manager and the Office of Open Space. The Commission asked the County's Disability Compliance Specialist to review the changes approved by Morris and provide recommendations.¹⁰⁸ The Specialist agreed with the changes and did not provide any formal recommendations, clearing the way for the plans to proceed as designed.

The perimeter trail was designed to be unobtrusive and avoid the need for grading. The trail's steps were constructed from 4x4s and earth, their rise and run responding to the site's contours. During his visit to the site to plan the enhancements, Morris worked through his thinking about the perimeter trail's design:

Yeah, yeah and these pathways, I don't think should be like gravel or anything like that. I think it should be earth, because...I would like the pathways to be as unobtrusive as possible. Hopefully, we won't have to put bark or stuff on it, but if we have to, we have to. Again, I would defer to Peg [Ferm] about that. I think what can we do that's going to be a definite pathway here but is not going to look like a garden path. It's got to look like part of the site. And the same way down here. So it's clear enough that that's where you go, that's the access – not that you can't wander around everywhere else but just what is the nature of the path going to be? I would like to hear from her – her thoughts – about that.¹⁰⁹

Morris relied on Ferm to finalize the trail's technical design and approved the trail with the condition that a handrail not be installed. Like the proposed benches, he objected to the addition of any feature that would visually disrupt the earthwork's form.¹¹⁰ The trail was surfaced with crushed rock in keeping with the team's intention to use natural materials that were compatible with the earthwork's character.¹¹¹

Major maintenance work completed by 1997 included the removal of invasive growth, improvements to the drainage system, restoration of eroded contours, and reseeded turf. Enhancement work completed in consultation with Morris included a perimeter trail and stairs, a new parking lot vehicle gate, installation of the bench designed by Morris, a granite entrance sign, and replacement of the original tree stumps with cut telephone poles.

TREE STUMPS

Morris specified in his original design proposal that tree stumps on the site be preserved as artifacts and incorporated into the process of shaping the site, "Between contours 165 and 185 (ungraded area) I would like to leave all trees 16"

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Cath Brunner, King County Arts Commission to Della Shaffer, King County Office of Civil Rights and Enforcement, February 22, 1996, correspondence, Series 1747, KC Archives.

¹⁰⁹ Robert Morris, Cath Brunner, and Helen Lessick, May 5, 1995, transcript of a tape-recorded conversation, Series 1747, KC Archives.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Cath Brunner, video conversation with authors.

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in diameter and over as 5' high trunks. This would in some sense mark the previous state of the land."¹¹² The project's early construction reports described the clearing and grubbing of the site but did not mention whether any stumps were left. Morris foresaw this possibility and described the trees as a "provisional detail" that were subordinate to the need to harvest topsoil for use elsewhere on the site to support the rye grass planting.¹¹³ As many as 16 stumps can be seen in a photo of the site taken after the site was graded.¹¹⁴ *Art in America* described them in a 1980 article, "His blackened tree trunks are sentries, amputees, or simple columns, and are in stark contrast to the curve and flow of the terraced area."¹¹⁵ Morris' design called for the stumps to be cut, stripped of bark, and coated in a wood preservative. Maintaining the trunks has remained an active process since the site's completion.

In 1983, the Mayor of Kent observed that "The tree stumps continue to have second-growth foliage and resemble bushes rather than stumps."¹¹⁶ Around the same time, Morris was consulted regarding the parking lot project and was asked for his thoughts on preserving the trunks. He proposed casting them in concrete and replacing them; he said it was important to retain them.¹¹⁷ A site condition report from 1988 noted that the stumps were rotting, and one had been knocked over.¹¹⁸ Although the conceptual budget for the unrealized 1990 site rehabilitation included a line item for reconstituting the trunks in glass fiber reinforced concrete (GFRC), it appears that the trunks did not receive any meaningful attention. During the dispute with the County Council over the earthwork's maintenance in the early 1990s, the Arts Commission stated its intention to gradually remove the stumps as they decayed and not replace them.¹¹⁹ This decision likely played well with the site's immediate neighbors who particularly disliked the stumps.¹²⁰ However, it appears that County's withholding of maintenance funds meant that the stumps were not removed.

During planning discussions with Morris for the 1995 rehabilitation, he noted that many of the stumps had fallen down and that they should be replaced with concrete casts of the two or three largest trunks, "It's just a big stump and it's black and that's the way the cement...that's the way what we do should look. It should look like a ravaged tree."¹²¹ As the team explored options for replacing the trees, including substituting them with telephone poles, Morris reaffirmed their role, "But the importance of these objects as ghosts, remnants, residue, memories, witnesses to the past is essential to the concept of the work."¹²²

LAND ART MOVEMENT

The Morris Earthwork is significant as the work of an established Land Artist that is recognizable by its use of the movement's vocabulary, including monumental scale, significant earth moving, and a focus on visitor experience. The piece is a response to the symposium's brief to provide a design that occupies the entire site, a former gravel mine that was, in turn, assigned to Morris. The project marked a new era for Land Art by providing greater public access to large-scale earthworks and by establishing its viability as a tool for reclaiming industrially abused land.

The movement known as Land Art or Earthworks began in the 1960's as an exploration by predominantly American artists interested in making a conceptual, spatial and formal departure from traditional object-oriented sculpture.

¹¹² Morris, "Proposal for the Site at Johnson Pit No. 30."

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Colleen Chartier, photograph, Series 1747, KC Archives.

¹¹⁵ Noah, "Cost-effective Earth Art," 12.

¹¹⁶ Isabel K. Hogan, Mayor of Kent to Mickey Gustin, King County Arts Commission, October 5, 1983, correspondence, Series 1747, KC Archives.

¹¹⁷ "Call from Bob Morris re Swift Proposal," August 3, 1984, notes, Series 1747, KC Archives.

¹¹⁸ King County Arts Commission, Condition Report, February 1988, Series 1747, KC Archives.

¹¹⁹ Mayumi Tsutakawa, Manager, Cultural Resources Division to Paul Bardem, King County Councilmember, December 2, 1992, correspondence, Series 1747, KC Archives.

¹²⁰ "Notes on Community Meeting of Morris Earthwork Neighbors."

¹²¹ Morris, Brunner, Lessick, transcript.

¹²² Morris to Lessick and Brunner.

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Rather than self-referential objects that perpetuated a commodity-centric gallery environ, Land Artists eschewed traditional norms of sculpture and shifted focus outside gallery and studio walls to employ the vast scale of landscapes as canvas, stage, and material. Robert Morris, along with Robert Smithson, Michael Heizer, and Dennis Oppenheim, were some of the key artists who defined the formal and conceptual ideas of Land Art at this time.

Artists working within Land Art engaged a range of conceptual inspirations including human and natural history, ancient timescales, ecological processes, political/environmental statements, and phenomenological embodiment. There was often a direct manipulation of existing site materials or, when new materials were brought into the work, they did so to establish a dialogue between the piece and its surroundings.¹²³ Land Art actively engaged the site, its surrounds, and the viewer as participant. Though the work built upon the discourse established by Minimalism, Conceptualism, and even Abstract Expressionism, many of the artists felt that Land Art provided a unique departure from previous “-isms” through the actualization of a process rather than the representation of one. As stated in Morris' keynote address from the Earthworks Symposium, the departure from object sculpture undertaken by some earthwork artists was more than a variation on historic themes but presented wholly new structural perspectives to artmaking, affecting much more than aesthetics, but also connecting earthworks to a space, its history, and time in a way that had not been previously examined.¹²⁴

During the 1960's and 1970's, Robert Morris was included in the handful of influential exhibitions that defined the Land Art movement. This included *Earth Works* at the Dwan Gallery in NY (1968); *Earth Art* at the Andrew Dickson White Museum of Art at Cornell University (1969); *Sonsbeek 71* in Velsen, Netherlands (1971); and *Sculpture off the Pedestal* at the Grand Rapids Art Museum (1973). In combination, these exhibitions codified the work of these artists into a new art genre.¹²⁵ Few of these exhibitions supported the production of large-scale earthworks and even fewer hosted these siteworks within easy access of the viewing public. Along with *Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)* for the Earthworks Symposium, the *Observatory* for the *Sonsbeek 71* exhibition in the Netherlands and *Grand Rapids, Project 'X'* for *Sculpture off the Pedestal* provided large-scale earthworks by Morris within relative proximity to more populated areas. These three projects are the only large-scale earthworks to be realized by Morris throughout the world.

In the years leading up to the symposium, Morris, like Smithson, pursued an artistic collaboration with industry. For both artists, to reclaim industrial sites was not an act of concealing damage done by industrial production or restoring to a pre-industry condition; rather, it was to re-contextualize this land from an industrial resource into the broader cultural milieu.¹²⁶ Both accepted that these sites were a byproduct of modern life, but Morris cautioned the employment of artists as a way of exonerating industry from the environmental and social impacts of their processes.¹²⁷ While collaboration between artist and industry was pursued in the 1960's and 1970's, it was not until the symposium that this relationship was actualized. As such, the event marked an advancement in the movement of Land Art and a new chapter in public art on a national scale.

Through the 1960's and 1970's, there was also a critical re-examination of art and its role within public spaces.¹²⁹ While some earthworks artists were making art predominantly within remote and inaccessible locations for the sake of scale and impact, there was interest among others of working within more populated areas. In his address for the Earthworks Symposium, Morris suggested that while the romanticism of the earthworks within remote locations hold an appeal, the works situated within urban sites carry with them a greater social, economic, political, historic, and

¹²³ John Beardsley, *Earthworks and Beyond: Contemporary Art in the Landscape*, New York: Abbeville Press, 1998, 103.

¹²⁴ Robert Morris, "Robert Morris keynote address," in "Earthworks: Land Reclamation as Sculpture," exhibition catalog, Seattle Art Museum, 1979, 11-13.

¹²⁵ *Earth art: Jan Dibbets, Hans Haacke, Neil Jenney, Richard Long, David Medalla, Robert Morris, Dennis Oppenheim, Robert Smithson, Günther Uecker*, 1970, exhibition catalog, Cornell University.

¹²⁶ Beardsley, *Earthworks and beyond*, 26.

¹²⁷ Morris, Robert. "Notes on Art as/and Land Reclamation," 98.

¹²⁸ Sarah Clark, unpublished essay, typescript, Seattle Art Museum Dorothy Stimson Bullitt Library, Seattle, WA.

¹²⁹ Sarah Clark, unpublished essay, 3, Seattle Art Museum Dorothy Stimson Bullitt Library, Seattle, Washington.

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physical relevance that “is more public in the literal, aesthetic and social sense.”¹³⁰ Furthermore, whether an earthwork was situated within a remote location or an urban or industrial setting, impacted its relationship with the public to, in Morris' opinion, a moral degree. “Such different assumptions, motives, responses, and results also do more than raise aesthetic issues as to what art can be. They raise moral questions, as well, as to where art should be, and who should own it, and how it should be used.”¹³¹ The proximity of the Morris Earthwork to the City of Seattle would signal a conceptual and geographic pivot in the movement, and the questions raised by Morris would remain relevant critical considerations within Land Art for decades to follow.¹³²

REACTION TO *Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)*

At the time of the Earthworks Symposium, the Vancouver, British Columbia publication, *The Province*, wrote, “the state of Washington is initiating one of the most dramatically innovative and important projects in the history of contemporary art...There can be little question that, in both scope and ambitious forethought, it will redefine and redirect the future role of art. But the ramifications of this land sculpture go far beyond art and into the area of environmental control.”¹³³ The Morris Earthwork's unique purpose meant that it was critiqued as an artwork, as a public amenity, and as a reclamation tool.

In the months and years following the symposium, enthusiasm remained high for the implications the piece engendered for future Land Art, public art, and reclamation art projects. The Morris Earthwork would serve as an inflection point in the Land Art movement in concept and audience. While under construction, an article in *Artforum International* noted that the piece embodied a groundbreaking pivot from the earlier earthworks of the desert that were seen as “the most private, inaccessible art activity imaginable” to “a major public art scheme” because of its siting on public, post-industrial land.¹³⁴ In the decades to follow, the Morris Earthwork would garner national and international attention for its role in the movement even as the work came under threat from disrepair in the early 1990's. In 1992, the Manager of the King County Cultural Resources Division, Mayumi Tsutakawa, noted that the site was visited by individuals and scholars from Japan, Germany and throughout the United States who had traveled solely for the purpose of seeing the work.¹³⁵ Around the same time, a letter to the Visual Arts Coordinator at the King County Arts Commission, Peggy Weiss, from the Visual Arts Coordinator of the National Endowment of the Arts described the work as innovative, precedent-setting and of national and international significance.¹³⁶ The Cultural Council of Southern Holland called the Morris Earthwork, “the most important example of earthworks worldwide.”¹³⁷

In the decades that have followed, the continued recognition of the Morris Earthwork as a significant artwork is largely due to the example it provides as a reclamation project uniquely focused on creating art. The piece laid the groundwork for future reclamation projects and subgenres of Environmental Art, like Ecological Art, yet these projects often perform additional programmatic or ecological functions.¹³⁸ Morris maintained that *Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)* was art and should be critiqued within that discourse, first and foremost.¹³⁹ He used the project and the questions posed within

¹³⁰ Morris, “Keynote Address,” 14.

¹³¹ Morris, “Keynote Address,” 14.

¹³² Foote, “Monument-sculpture-earthwork,” 35.

¹³³ Art Perry, “Earth Works,” *The Province*, (Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada), August 26, 1979, 5.

¹³⁴ Foote, “Monument-sculpture-earthwork,” 35.

¹³⁵ Mayumi Tsutakawa, Manager King County Cultural Resources Division to Paul Barden, King County Councilmember, letter, December 2, 1992, Series 1747, KC Archives.

¹³⁶ Rosilyn Alter, Director Visual Arts Program at the National Endowment for the Arts to Peggy Weiss, Visual Arts Coordinator at King County Arts Commission, letter, May 26, 1993.

¹³⁷ Maarten Van Wesemael, Cultural Council of Southern Holland to Peggy Weiss, Visual Arts Coordinator at King County Arts Commission, letter, August 11, 1993.

¹³⁸ Matilsky, *Fragile Ecologies*, 42.

¹³⁹ Morris, “Keynote Address,” 14.

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his keynote address as a way to “set out the critical terms for earthworks that may be public, but aren’t mediocre.”¹⁴⁰ That the Morris earthwork so singularly focuses on the creation of art has made it a model for future projects, albeit one that is neither often nor easily emulated. However, the earthwork, symposium, and Morris’ keynote address have shaped a number of exhibitions and texts since 1979. The 11th International Sculpture Conference in Washington, DC featured *Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)* and continued the conversation that the symposium started in a session on “Sculpture and Land Reclamation.”¹⁴¹ The Queens Museum in Brooklyn produced the exhibit, *Fragile Ecologies: Contemporary Artists’ Interpretations and Solutions*, focused on Ecological Art and included the Morris Earthwork as part of the historic development of the movement.¹⁴²

The questions posed by Morris have remained relevant not only for the art community but across disciplines as the cultural relationship with post-industrial sites continues to be evaluated. Two Canadian environmental humanities journals published articles by environmental philosopher Thomas Heyd, who called the Morris Earthwork, “one of the most successful examples of reclamation art,” because of its ability to eschew the additional programming of parks or preserves that typically accompany reclamation projects. Rather, the Morris Earthwork embraces the site’s history with beauty and contemplative design.¹⁴³ In 2014, the Australian publication, *Artlink Magazine*, published an article authored by scholars and professionals in mining resources and art history that identified the Morris Earthwork as a model for contemporary reclamation projects. The authors argued that the Morris Earthwork provides a reimagination of a post-mining site that does not absolve the industrial past and avoided the “fictitious morality” of the more common ecological rehabilitation of recent projects. The Morris Earthwork provides an example of how to “reframe a viewer’s understanding, to change the context of vision and challenge our valuation of the “touched” [landscapes].¹⁴⁴

In the context of Morris Earthwork as a technical tool of reclamation, the piece received a more varied reception, if also one that was predominantly hopeful. In the first winter after the piece’s construction, the grading failed on the east side of the site, blocking off part of the road and causing need for immediate reconstruction. Coupled with the minimalist aesthetic of the work, the neighboring community raised concerns about the intent and approach of the project including whether the site needed to be reclaimed in the first place.¹⁴⁵ However, as a first of its kind project, public critique was tempered by latitude for the procedural, monetary, and technological hurdles that needed to be overcome for realization. *Artweek* concluded that amidst public concern, “the validity of reclamation has barely been tested here, but the attempt points toward a more rewarding future,”¹⁴⁶ The local publication, *The Weekly* commented that, “given the record of suspicion and conflict between artists and public bodies in the last decade, the way King County has brought practical and aesthetic consideration in harmony bears close attention.”¹⁴⁷ Over the decades, community support would grow even as maintenance for the earthwork fluctuated. In support of maintenance of the Morris Earthwork in 1993, Grace Hirinaka, Chair of the Kent Arts Commission, wrote a letter to the members of the King County Council to assure that, “the citizens of Kent take great pride in their Earthworks, both as an artwork and as a park...It would be a shame to let the Morris Earthworks deteriorate when there is so much public support for the piece.”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁰ Leslie Ryan, “Art + Ecology: Land Reclamation Works of Artists Robert Smithson, Robert Morris, and Helen Mayer Harrison and Newton Harrison,” *Environmental Philosophy* 4, no. 1+2 (2007): 110.

¹⁴¹ “Bureau of Mines Research 80,” Janice D. Burket, editor, United States: U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Mines, 1980, 24.

¹⁴² Matilsky, *Fragile Ecologies*, 42.

¹⁴³ Thomas Heyd, “Revisiting the Artistic Reclamation of Nature,” *The Trumpeter*, vol.15, no. 1, 1998.

¹⁴⁴ Amelia Hine, Philip Kirsch, and Iris Amizlev, “Red Mud: Art and the Post-mining Landscape,” *Artlink Magazine*, December 2014, accessed May 2, 2021, <https://www.artlink.com.au/articles/4247/red-mud-art-and-the-post-mining-landscape/>.

¹⁴⁵ Ron Glown, “Work for Landscape and Gallery,” *Artweek* 11, (1980): 1.

¹⁴⁶ Glown, “Work for Landscape and Gallery,” 1.

¹⁴⁷ Roger Downey, “Earthworks Get Off the Ground,” *The Weekly*, January 10-17, 1979, 18, Series 278, KC Archives.

¹⁴⁸ Grace Hiranaka, Chair of the Ken Arts Commission to Members of the King County Council, “Kent Letter of Support,” May 13, 1993, KC Archives.

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REGIONAL DESIGN CONTEXT

Land Art coalesced as a movement in the mid to late 1960's concurrently with a growing interest in the fields of architecture and landscape architecture to engage art, public space, and the environment in unique and interconnected ways. Artists, designers, and architects within the Pacific Northwest pioneered ambitious projects during this time that blurred the boundaries between art, landscape, environmentalism, and restoration, and challenged government agencies and the public to widen their expectations of how art and public spaces should look and perform. The Morris Earthwork was firmly grounded in the regional culture of fusing a strong environmental ethos with design, a practice evidenced by previous public development projects and an increasing investment in earthworks in public spaces. In the years leading up to the symposium, designers and developers in the Pacific Northwest region completed a variety of ambitious projects of different types, such as parks and corporate campuses that addressed a growing national concern for environmentally restorative design.

Within Seattle and King County alone, artists Buster Simpson, Andrew Keating, and Sherry Markovitz collaborated on the design of the Viewland-Hoffman substation in Seattle's Fremont neighborhood (1977-1979); Richard Haag forayed into phytoremediation and adaptive reuse with his design for Gas Works Park (1969); and Peter Walker and SOM's design for the Weyerhaeuser corporate campus, built on previously logged land, made an environmental statement through its siting and deeply integrated landscape and building design (1972). These projects illustrate a cultural zeitgeist marked by a receptiveness to a design approach that addressed environmental issues and that was interested in pushing boundaries and redefining genres.

Simultaneous to these civic projects, earthwork artists were being courted to work in the region as well. In 1971, Morris was commissioned to create *Untitled (Steam work for Bellingham)* at Western Washington University's campus in Bellingham, WA (installed in 1974). The piece is a 20'x20' arrangement of rocks set between low-rolling hills with an above-ground pipe connected to the University's heating system that emits steam on a timer. Despite the small scale of the work, the choice of materials and connection to the ephemeral and phenomenological is aligned with the ethos of Morris' earthwork installations from around the time.¹⁴⁹ Not long after, in 1976, fellow earthwork artist, Nancy Holt, was also commissioned to create a sculpture on the campus. The piece is entitled, *Rock Rings*.

In 1975, the City of Seattle provided funding to Michael Heizer, for what would be his first civic commission.¹⁵⁰ The waterfront site of the installation was used as a dumping ground for debris from the construction of the nearby Interstate 5 freeway and was being transformed into the future Myrtle Edwards Park. Despite a proviso in the call for work that the selected artist help clean the rubble, Heizer's design did not speak to the site's previous industrial abuse nor incorporate the rubble in any way. The resulting sculpture, *Adjacent, Against, Upon* is composed of three large granite slabs imported from a quarry in the nearby Cascades with varying proximity to three concrete plinths; it is situated within a park replete with walking and biking trails.

While planning for the symposium was underway, local Landscape Architect Richard Haag expressed his interest in being considered for participation in a letter to the King County Arts Commission.¹⁵¹ He asked for "equal time and consideration" as a potential participant and pointed out that landscape architects are experienced in balancing "the aesthetics of earth sculpture with the techniques of land reclamation," pointing to his recent work at Gas Works Park and other projects. Despite a natural synergy between the concerns of earthworks artists and landscape architects, the symposium organizers remained committed to only selecting artists to propose site designs. Haag was ultimately invited to, and participated in, one of the symposium's public panels. The Earthworks Symposium's singular focus on artists

¹⁴⁹Jeffrey Kastner, Brian Wallis, *Land and Environmental Art*, London: Phaidon, 1998, 102.

¹⁵⁰ Deloris Tarzan, "What 'those big rocks' mean to Seattle," *The Seattle Times*, January 12, 1977, 74.

¹⁵¹ Richard Haag to Members of the King County Arts Commission, Board of Advisors and participating artists; King County Design Commission, "Earthworks / Land Reclamation as Sculpture," correspondence, March 20, 1979, Series 278, KC Archives.

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created an environment where art-based solutions were able to claim space in the region's innovation and commitment to incorporating environmentalism into design.

ROBERT MORRIS

Robert Morris, designer of *Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)*, was a critical thinker, writer, and creator whose contributions to Land Art shaped the discourse and direction of the movement. Morris' career in visual arts spanned from the 1950's until his death in 2018, and his writing and visual work was comparably influential to the development of Minimalism and Process Art movements as to that of Land Art. Morris' notoriety within the field of Land Art and global reputation made him an appealing choice by the Arts Commission for the symposium. In response to the selection of Morris, the Seattle Times art critic wrote, "For nearly the past two decades, each advance in Morris' work has been a clear step in creative thinking which has influenced the creations of other artists and forced tentative new definitions of what art means and could be... If the K.C.A.C. wants widespread attention for its innovative idea that earth art and land reclamation – which for years have co-existed oblivious of each other's existence – can be coupled, it is about to get its wish."¹⁵²

Morris was born in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1931. He received an education in engineering from the University of Kansas, studied art at Kansas City Art Institute and California School of Fine Arts in San Francisco, studied philosophy at Reed College in Oregon, and took a break from school to serve in the Army Corps of Engineers. After college, Morris spent several years living in San Francisco before moving to New York City in 1959 and receiving a Master's degree in Art History from Hunter College in 1963. His early explorations of painting, dance, and choreography would influence the sculpture, earthwork and performance work for which he received most of his notoriety. Morris' particular interest in Land Art was on perception, the carceral, the phenomenological, and ancient form making and symbology.¹⁵³

Over his career, Morris had solo exhibitions at numerous major museums including the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York (1970), the Art Institute of Chicago (1980), the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington D.C (1990) and a retrospective at Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York (1994). His writing is equally influential to his visual work, and a series of essays produced in 1966 for *ArtForum* magazine entitled, "Notes on Sculpture," remain a foundational critical text within the field. Likewise, Morris' 1993 publication *Continuous Project Altered Daily* compiled several influential writings on sculpture including a version of his keynote address for the Earthworks Symposium. At the time of Morris' death in 2018, Morris was living in Kingston, New York, and new work of his was on view at the Leo Castelli Gallery in New York City.

Morris' involvement in Land Art had its formal beginning over a decade before the King County Arts Commission's Earthworks Symposium, with his 1966 proposal *Project in Earth and Sod* for the Dallas Fort Worth Airport. The work was not built, but Morris continued exploring this conceptual practice with a series of sketches, proposals, and participation in the major Land Art exhibitions of the time. Of the work Morris was generating, three large-scale earthworks were constructed. These works included *Observatory* in the Netherlands; *Grand Rapids Project 'X'* in Michigan; and *Untitled (Johnson Pit #30)* in Washington state.

Morris' first constructed earthwork, *Observatory*, was built for the *Sonsbeek 71* exhibition in the Netherlands in 1971 and involved the construction of two large circular embankments with a height of about 9' and the diameter of the outer ring reaching 300'. There are a series of breaks within the mounded earth that direct the viewer toward sunrise on the equinoxes. This piece was initially demolished after the 1971 exhibition and then reconstructed in 1977 at a new location in the region. While the second location was technically on land that was a by-product of infrastructural mitigation of the nearby waterways, this was not a conceptual driver of the work as it was the recreation of the original form. Since its reconstruction, *Observatory* has been well-maintained.

¹⁵² Deloris Tarzan, "Does King County have a tiger by the tail?" *The Seattle Times*, January 14, 1979.

¹⁵³ Beardsley, *Earthworks and Beyond*, 26.

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The other large-scale earthwork by Morris, *Grand Rapids Project "X"*, was created in 1973-1974 for the *Sculpture off the Pedestal* exhibition organized by The Women's Committee of the Grand Rapids Art Museum in Grand Rapids, MI. *Project X* is significant as the first piece of Land Art created through funding provided by the National Endowments for the Arts' 1% for the Arts monies. This funding mechanism laid important groundwork for the King County Arts Commission who also received money from the NEA for the creation of *Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)*. *Project X* is located in Belknap Park and is composed of two large asphalt paths on the side of a hill that form an "X" when viewed from above. Despite the historic significance of how *Project X* was procured, the work itself has not aged favorably. "*Project X* never became a central focus for much of anything, and it certainly isn't a part of most citizens' everyday lives. Walking its cracked, weedy surface, it's hard to see it as anything other than a modern ruin, a weathered echo of a grand idea from long ago."¹⁵⁴ As such, *Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)* is the only large-scale Morris earthwork in the United States that has been well-maintained close to its original form and condition.

Morris' prominence within the Land Art movement and previous built earthworks made him an appealing selection for the symposium's demonstration piece. The jury felt Morris had the credentials "to give the project credibility in the eyes of art critics, environmentalists, government agencies, and the public."¹⁵⁵ However, their selection was also a bold choice. Morris was one of few artists at the time still truly embodying an avant-garde approach to art making.¹⁵⁶ His work, known to spark controversy and mixed reviews, was also often precedent setting. "In a 1968 show at the Dwan Gallery, he presented a heap of dirt, industrial detritus, petroleum jelly and tar, dumped unceremoniously together in the middle of the gallery floor. Titled, "Earthwork," it was written of as a remarkable and prophetic piece, which it proved to be."¹⁵⁷

Morris would use his keynote address at the symposium to provoke critical discussion on the role artists would play in this new frontier. His concluding question to his address would ask artists to examine the moral implications of their role in the collaborative process with post-industrial sites. This question has grown no less relevant over time and continues to be referenced in cross-disciplinary articles on the topics of post-industrial reclamation, Land Art, and ecological art.^{158, 159, 160}

Will it be a little easier in the future to rip up the landscape for one last shovelful of non-renewable energy source if an artist can be found (cheap, mind you) to transform the devastation into an inspiring and modern work of art?... It would seem that artists participating in art as land reclamation will be forced to make moral as well as aesthetic choices. There may be more choices available that either a cooperative or critical stance for those who participate. But it would perhaps be a misguided assumption to suppose that artists hire to work in industrial blasted landscapes would necessarily and invariably choose to covert such sites into idyllic and reassuring places, thereby socially redeeming those who wasted the landscape in the first place.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁴ Buist, Kevin, "Why We Announced Project 1 on a Robert Morris Earthwork," *ArtPrize*, June 28, 2018, accessed March 1, 2021, <https://www.artprize.org/blog/why-we-announced-project-1-on-a-robert-morris-earthwork>.

¹⁵⁵ Jones, *Technical Report*, 4.

¹⁵⁶ Downey, "Earthworks Get Off the Ground."

¹⁵⁷ Tarzan, "Does King County have a tiger by the tail?"

¹⁵⁸ Hine, "Red Mud."

¹⁵⁹ Heyd, "Revisiting the Artistic Reclamation of Nature."

¹⁶⁰ Arbogast, "The Human Factor in Mining Reclamation."

¹⁶¹ Morris, "Keynote Address," 14.

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NATIONAL FOCUS ON ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF MINING

The ideas put forth for the Earthworks Symposium provided a unique solution built off decades of multidisciplinary exploration on how best to manage former industrial sites and their impacts on neighboring landscapes and communities.

As early as the 1950's, mining companies were investigating how to reclaim industrial sites and mitigate the negative impact of industrial extraction on surrounding environments.¹⁶² In 1966, *Landscape Architecture Magazine* covered a report released by the National Sand and Gravel Association and the University of Illinois Department of Landscape Architecture, emphasizing the opportunity for collaboration between the disciplines. The report encouraged involvement of landscape architects early in the mining process to help prevent unnecessary damage to the landscape, high costs of eventual repair or reconstruction, and assuage the increasing public opposition to the disruption and destruction of mining operations.¹⁶³ Examples of a successful collaboration included the conversion of industrial sites to community parks and recreational amenities.

In the years leading up to the symposium, Robert Morris and Robert Smithson were pursuing a less program-driven approach for mitigating abused sites by proposing art-based reclamation of former quarries and mines. While some progress was made internationally – Smithson completed two earthworks at a sand quarry in the Netherlands for the *Sonsbeek 71* exhibition and one work at a quarry in Italy - neither artist was able to realize any built work in collaboration with mining companies in the United States. It was not until the Earthworks Symposium provided a connection between artists and industrially abused sites that this relationship was able to be actualized. As such, the symposium marked the first time an artist had been employed in the US for the purpose of reclaiming a post-industrial site.

The urgency to apply concepts expressed by the Morris Earthwork in the real world was intensified as federal regulations evolved to address industries' disastrous impact on landscapes across the country. Congress passed the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act in 1977. The program, which has been renewed five times and is set to expire this year (2021), funds the Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Program by assessing a reclamation fee on every ton of coal produced. The Reclamation Program distributes funds to states and tribes to clean up coal mines that were abandoned prior to the legislation's passing and to reclaim mined sites that were exhausted since the program was established for "productive and beneficial use." Congress passed the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), also known as the Superfund Act, in 1980. The law established a tax on chemical and gas companies and created a fund for cleaning up hazardous waste sites.

The symposium's proposal and the Morris Earthwork's promise provided mining companies and other industries with an alternative tool for responding to emerging legal requirements for cleaning up or reclaiming their sites. Anaconda Mineral Corporation retained Land Artist Michael Heizer in 1981 for a reclamation project at their Tonopah, Nevada molybdenum mine. Heizer's design called for repurposing tons of the operation's waste rock to create a giant complex of three pyramids on platforms partially enclosed by a curving wall. The project was abandoned in 1982 when the mine closed.¹⁶⁴ Soon after, the Ottawa Silica Company Foundation commissioned Heizer to create a design for the company's abandoned strip mine adjacent to Buffalo Rock State Park in Illinois. Heizer's design, *Effigy Tumuli*, created five large-scale earthen mounds representing animals native to the region. The piece was completed in 1985 and was paid for with a combination of public and private funds, including the National Endowment for the Arts, Illinois's Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation program, and the US Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Anthony M. Bauer, "How to Make More Than Holes in the Ground: A report on the first comprehensive study sponsored by the National Sand and Gravel Association." *Landscape Architecture Magazine* 56, no. 2 (1966): 116.

¹⁶³ *Ibid*, 116-117.

¹⁶⁴ Michael Albert Hedger, "Larger than life: size, scale and the imaginary in the work of Land Artists Michael Heizer, Walter De Maria, and Dennis Oppenheim," Doctoral thesis, Art History and Art Education, University of New South Wales, 2014.

¹⁶⁵ Erika Doss, *Spirit Poles and Flying Pigs: Public Art and Cultural Democracy in American Communities*, Washington, DC: Smithsonian

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In 1998, Landscape Architecture firm Marth Schwartz Partners transformed a former mine site of 170 acres into a park with expressive landforms shaped from the former mine tailings. The landforms were envisioned as a gateway that would attract a tourist economy to the Ontario town economically impacted by the mine's closure. Of the Geraldton Mine Project, designer Martha Schwarz stated, "The concept was to take the tailings and sculpt them to create land art. As a result, people did stop [in the town]. They wondered, "What is this?" or "What's happening here?"¹⁶⁶ The employment of Land Art as the centerpiece of a reclamation effort is a legacy of the innovative approach established by the Morris Earthwork.

In a comprehensive report on the relationship between the simultaneous public demand for goods and for the protection of natural resources sponsored by the US Department of Interior and US Geologic Survey in 2000, landscape architects, planners, biologists, and engineers were prioritized as the disciplines situated for problem solving this demand.¹⁶⁷ However, *Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)* and Land Art were highlighted in their own section of the report as potential alternative solutions for adapting mining practices to public demands of more sustainable approaches to development.¹⁶⁸ Almost 30 years later, the Morris Earthwork was still being used as a precedent for an artful approach to reclamation instead of the standard cleanup methods.

PUBLIC FACILITIES AS PUBLIC PLACES

In addition to proving the effectiveness of art as a reclamation tool, the symposium and the Morris Earthwork are significant for their role in establishing the viability of public art as a solution for public infrastructure problems. Through the Earthworks Symposium, a novel partnership was struck between the King County Arts Commission and the Department of Public Works that forced both agencies to consider a unique art-based solution.¹⁶⁹

Prior to the creation of 1 Percent for Art programs in Seattle and King County, Seattle demonstrated its receptiveness to rethinking how sites of public infrastructure could relate to the community. In one such project, the Seattle City Light East Pine Substation, designed by Fred Bassetti (architect) and Richard Haag (landscape architect), was constructed in 1967 in the city's residential Central District. Bassetti engineered distinctive brick walls that varied in height to block and reveal the operations within the site. Cutouts in the walls allowed passersby to peer inside. The project included a viewing tower and children's play area, inviting the community to recreate on the power station's grounds. This project broke from a long tradition of trying to hide the utility or ignore public perception of the site altogether, and instead actively engaged the public through design elements

In 1976, landscape architect Lawrence Halprin's innovative design for Freeway Park lidded a section of Interstate 5 in downtown Seattle, creating the first ever park on top of a highway. The series of stepped plazas contain planting and waterfall features that artfully link communities on either side of the interstate. Most notably, the park did not use these features to completely hide nor disguise the freeway below. Rather, there are areas where the public can view the passing cars below, reminding them that the park is also a bridge.

Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30) advanced the practice of creating public facilities as public amenities by maintaining its identity as an artwork and setting a precedent for collaboration between public works agencies and artists. The Morris Earthwork was not designed as a park nor was it ecologically restorative. Morris did not feel it necessary to create a piece of art that was watered down for public space or simply decoration. His design provided a

Institution Press, 1995.

¹⁶⁶ Martha Schwartz Partners, "McLeod Tailings, Geraldton, Canada," accessed March 25, 2021, <https://msp.world/mcleod-tailings-geraldton-canada/#>.

¹⁶⁷ Arbogast, "The Human Factor in Mining Reclamation."

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 23.

¹⁶⁹ Brunner, Cath, "Artist Works – and thinking," Americans for the Arts, June 13, 2017, accessed March 13, 2021, <https://www.americansforthearts.org/2019/05/15/artists%E2%80%99-works%E2%80%94and-thinking>.

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bold, unique, and pivotal example of the role artists can play in public space. In Morris' statement for the symposium catalog he wrote:

But as this work is publicly funded, people whose tax dollars went toward its construction will demand to know how, failing the act of celebration, the work justifies the expenditure of money and effort. Some of them at least will want to know what it "means." To this I can only reply that the distinctive difference of art, what marks it off from all other organized human activity, is that it does not seek control through explanation. That it offers the freedom to experience and question is not an opportunity that its audience always welcomes. But the value of the present work, if any, will have to be sought on these terms.¹⁷⁰

As such, the Morris Earthwork would raise eyebrows, but also garner acclaim as the ambitious first example of art as reclamation in the country.

The Morris Earthwork would prove that art could in fact be the end product of a collaboration between different civic agencies. Up until this point, the infrastructure sites necessary for any city to run--transfer stations, wastewater plants, and power substations--were often hidden inside monolithic boxes, located in marginalized communities, or left unartfully exposed. Similarly, the afterlife of mining and extraction sites were typically limited to recontouring and, if possible, restored to a more ecologically stable state. At the same time, public art was largely conceived of as ornamentation added independently of the site's or building's design. The Earthworks Symposium invited artists to bring their thinking to bear on public policy issues by considering how to transform industrially abused sites. In doing so, it also asked a public works department to consider solutions outside of the standard technical approach.

Symposium organizers identified the King County Department of Public Work's 1 Percent for Art funding as available and appealing because it was generated by projects that were not considered appropriate sites for art, such as solid waste disposal stations and maintenance shops.¹⁷¹ One of the original concepts for the symposium was to undertake a large roads project, another area that was considered difficult to apply arts funding to. The closest King County's Department of Public Works had come to employing art-based solutions for these types of sites prior to the symposium was a desire to hide a transfer station from view with a large earthwork.¹⁷²

With new funding available through Percent for Art programs across the country, public administrators were challenged by the symposium's premise to consider artists as partners in developing solutions for public infrastructure projects. It is now taken for granted that public art is regularly considered as part of public works departments' project planning. In a critical examination of the Morris Earthwork, *Artweek* remarked on the process that created it, "But, as this project has attempted to prove, the strategies and compromises necessary to bring about an earthwork can be streamlined and formalized, thus permitting a greater esthetic freedom within established parameters."¹⁷³

In the years following the Earthworks Symposium, regional public art programs expanded their purview beyond civic plazas and building lobbies to bring artists to contribute to the design of public utility sites. The Phoenix Arts Commission developed a Public Art Plan in 1987 following the passage of a Percent for Art Ordinance the previous year. The plan's authors recommended that artists who were experienced working with earthworks be enlisted to work with the project engineers for a new solid waste management facility and cited Seattle's innovative public arts program as an

¹⁷¹ Jones, *Technical Report*, 21.

¹⁷² Jim Guenther, Department of Public Works to Yankee Johnson, King County Arts Commission, "1979 Earthworks Symposium, Summary of October 5 Meeting," October 6, 1978, memorandum, Series 1742, KC Archives.

¹⁷³ Ron Glown, "Earthworks as Reclamation, Problems and Promise," *Artweek* 10, (1979). 2.

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inspiration.¹⁷⁴ The project's design was completed in 1991 and included features that daylighted the facility's internal working and provided educational programming at an on-site amphitheater.

The Earthworks Symposium created a model for public agencies to cooperate on creating art-based projects for public utility sites. The Morris Earthwork project reconceived public art as a solution to reclaiming environmentally damaged land and set a precedent for similar projects nationally and internationally, including Harriet Feigenbaum's "Erosion and Sedimentation Control Plan for Red Ash and Coal Silt Area--Willow Rings," an art-based reclamation of a coal mine near Scranton, PA (1985); Mel Cin's "Revival Fields" at the Pig's Eye Landfill near St. Paul, MN (1992); Angelo Ciotto's earthwork project "Twin Stupas," that reclaims a surface mine outside Pittsburgh, PA (1996); Agnes Denes's commission by the Finnish government for "Tree Mountain - A Living Time Capsule-11,000 Trees, 11,000 People, 400 Years" (1992-1996); and landscape architect Martha Schwartz's artful reclamation of tailings from a former gold mine in Geraldton, Ontario, Canada (1998).

Reflecting on the symposium, Arts Commission Executive Director Yankee Johnson acknowledged that, "Everyone decided that, to be valid at all, any project would have to break new ground."¹⁷⁵ The King County Department of Public Works' commitment to the project signaled their willingness to not only steward the post-industrial sites they owned, but to embrace art as a worthy tool in the development of public infrastructure. Together with the Arts Commission, the two agencies pioneered a new model of inter-agency cooperation that reinvented the artist's role in public art to which the Morris Earthwork stands as testament.

¹⁷⁴ "Art Works: The Arizona Models," Jarrett Stodola, editor, The Phoenix Arts Commission, City of Phoenix, 1992, 60.

¹⁷⁵ Yankee Johnson, "Earthworks: Combining Environmental and Land Issues," in *Earthworks: Land Reclamation as Sculpture*, symposium catalog, King County Arts Commission and King County Department of Public Works, 1979, Series 278, KC Archives.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

☐ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other

Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 4.25

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 Zone Easting Northing

3 Zone Easting Northing

2 Zone Easting Northing

4 Zone Easting Northing

Or Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1 47.408071° -122.284289°
Latitude Longitude

4 47.407187° -122.283722°
Latitude Longitude

2 47.408322° -122.281861°
Latitude Longitude

5 47.407281° -122.284281°
Latitude Longitude

3 47.407393° -122.283023°
Latitude Longitude

6 47.407563° -122.284696°
Latitude Longitude

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The site is bounded on the north by the property line and on the east, south, and west by the continuous curve of 40th Place S and 37th Place S.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The property is comprised of the entire tax parcel north of 40th Place S as selected by the symposium organizers and as designed by Robert Morris in 1979.

11. Form Prepared By

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organization [c/o Dana Phelan, 4Culture]

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Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.



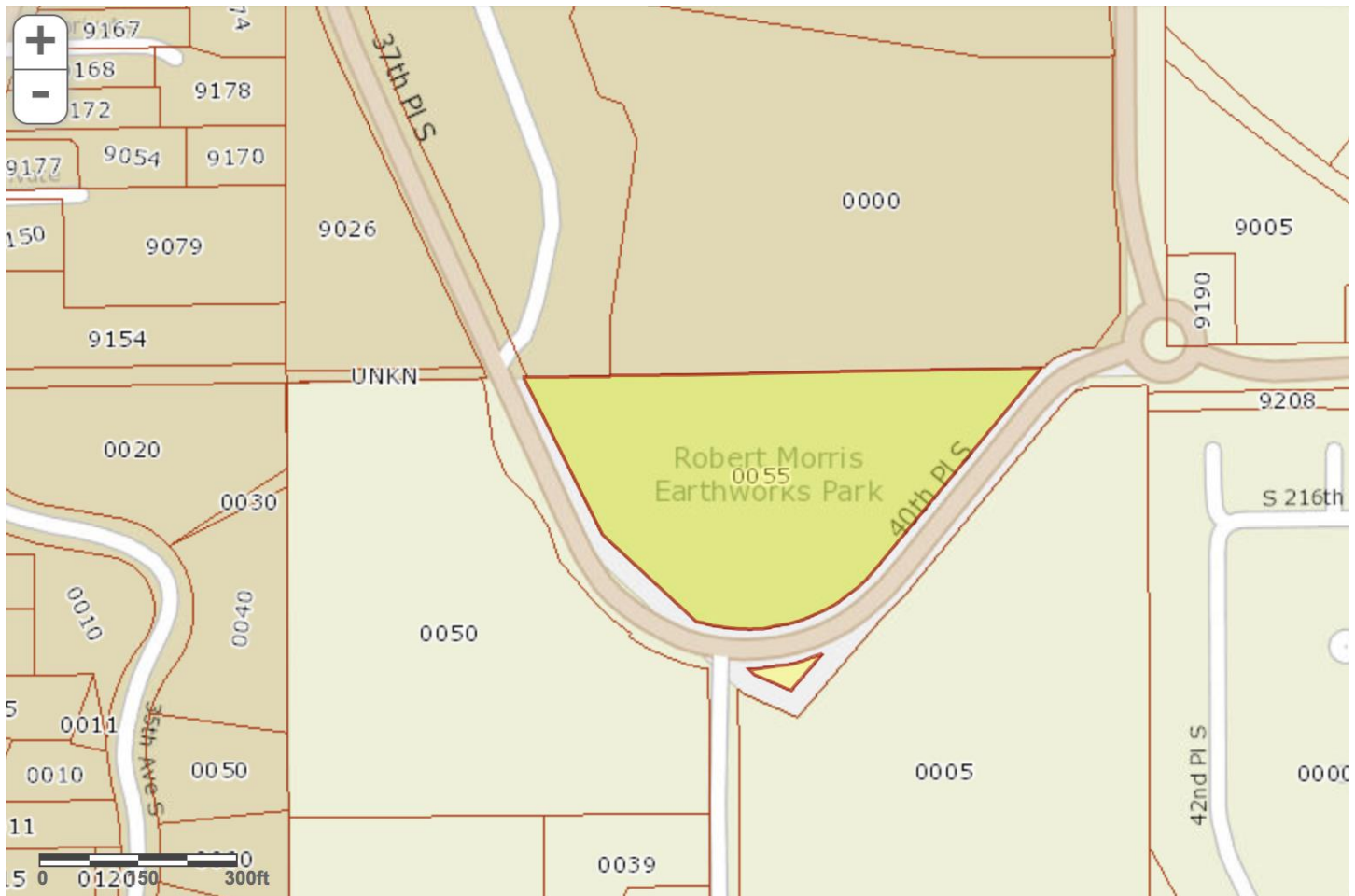
Boundaries for the nominated site, *Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)*.

Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)

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Tax Parcel map, King County Department of Assessments

<https://gismaps.kingcounty.gov/parcelviewer2/?pin=8879000055>

Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)

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Imagery ©2021 Google, Imagery ©2021 CNES / Airbus, Maxar Technologies, U.S. Geological Survey, Map data ©2021 50 ft

Site Resource Locations

- A: Granite marker. *Non contributing.*
- B: Parking lot. *Contributing.*
- C: Bench. *Non contributing.*
- D: Stairs. *Non contributing.*
- E: Perimeter Trail. *Non contributing.*
- F: Tree stumps. *Non contributing.*
- G: Foot bridge. *Non contributing.*

Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)

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LAND CLASSIFICATION AND SEGREGATION
THIS SQUARE INDICATES 40 ACRES 1" = 2.00'
INDICATE BY AREAS, USE OF LAND BY MARKS AND TYPE BY LETTERS

SECTION SW 10
TWP. 22 N
RANGE 4 E

TAX LOT NO. _____
PARCEL NO. _____

AERIAL PHOTO _____
QUARTER MAP _____
PLAT MAP _____
Folio No. 21249

LAND USE	ACRES
111 CULTIVATED	_____
# PASTURE	_____
00 TIMBER	_____
XX STUMP	_____
... GRAVEL OR	_____
USELESS	_____
V SWAMP	_____

LAND TYPE	ACRES
A SHOT CLAY	_____
B BOG	_____
C PEAT	_____
D SILT	_____
E LOAM	_____
F GRAVEL	_____
G BOTTOM	_____
H UPLANDS	_____
K HILLY	_____

IF USED AS 1/4 SECT. SCALE ONE INCH 400 FEET OR 160 ACRES OR 2640 FEET
IF USED AS 1/4 OF 1/4 " SCALE ONE INCH 200 FEET OR 40 ACRES OR 1320 FEET
IF USED AS 1/4-1/4 " SCALE ONE INCH 100 FEET OR 10 ACRES OR 660 FEET

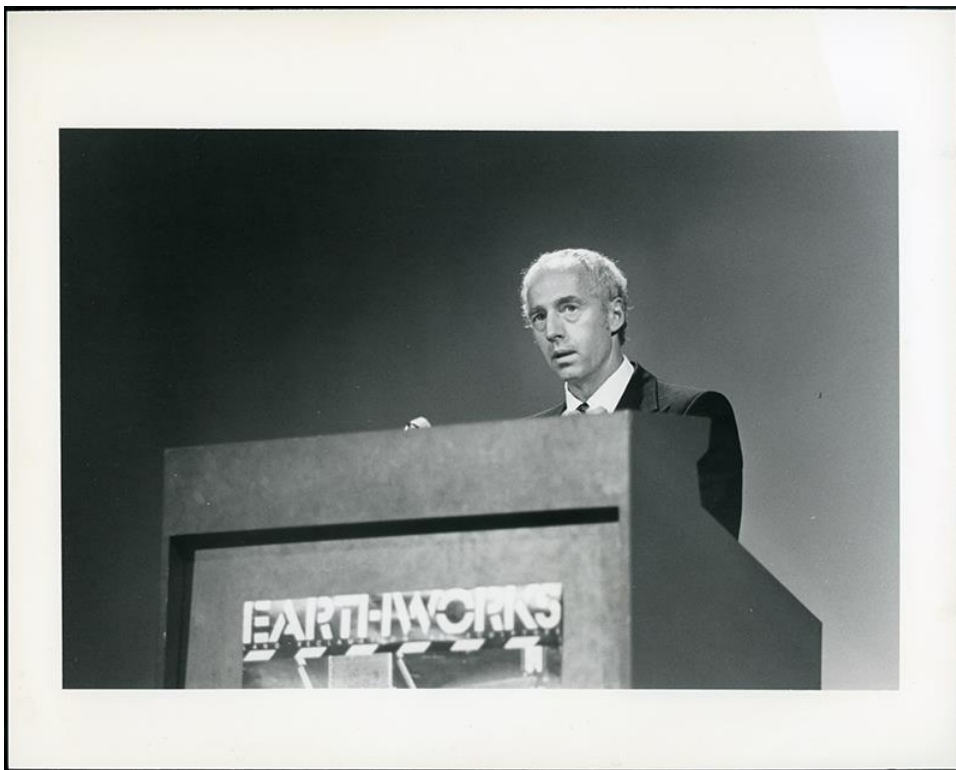
1938 Property Card map. Puget Sound Regional Branch, Washington State Archives, Bellevue, WA.

Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)

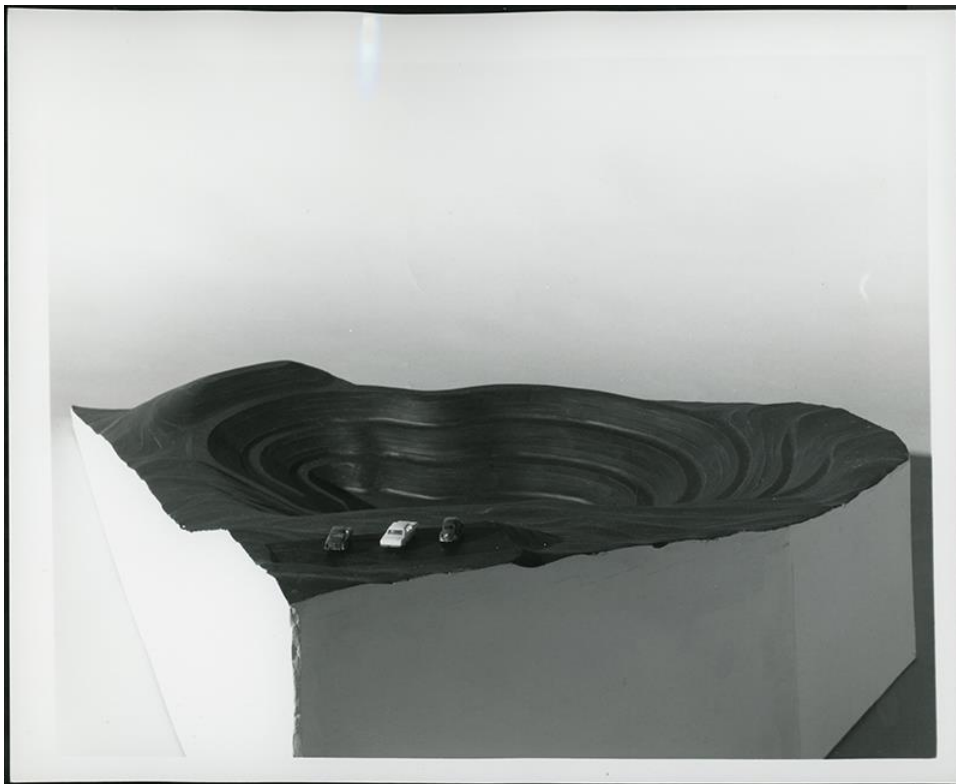
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Robert Morris delivered the keynote address at the 1979 symposium, "Earthworks: Land Reclamation as Sculpture." *Series 1747, King County Archives, Seattle, WA.*



Morris' model of his design for *Untitled Earthwork, Johnson Pit #30*. *Series 1747, King County Archives, Seattle, WA.*

Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)

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(MORRIS)

A-B $+A = 0$ $+B = 1052 ft^2 = 526 ft \cdot 20 = 10,520 ft^2 \div 27 = 389.64 d_3 +$
 $-A = 0$ $-B = 50 ft^2 = 25 ft \cdot 20 = 500 ft^2 \div 27 = 18.54 d_3 -$

B-C $+B = 1052 ft^2$ $+C = 1718 ft^2 = 1385 ft \cdot 20 = 27,700 \div 27 = 1025.94 d_3 +$
 $+B = 50 ft^2$ $-C = 94 ft^2 = 72 ft \cdot 20 = 1440 \div 27 = 53.34 d_3 -$

C-D $+C = 1718 ft^2$ $+D = 2212 ft^2 = 1965 ft \cdot 20 = 39,300 \div 27 = 1455.54 d_3 +$
 $-C = 94 ft^2$ $-D = 578 ft^2 = 336 ft \cdot 20 = 6720 \div 27 = 248.84 d_3 -$

D-E $+D = 2212 ft^2$ $+E = 2268 ft^2 = 2240 ft \cdot 20 = 44,800 \div 27 = 1659.25 d_3 +$
 $-D = 578 ft^2$ $-E = 1170 ft^2 = 884 ft \cdot 20 = 17,680 \div 27 = 654.84 d_3 -$

E-F $+E = 2268 ft^2$ $+F = 1618 ft^2 = 1345 ft \cdot 20 = 26,900 \div 27 = 1000.00 d_3 +$
 $-E = 1170 ft^2$ $-F = 1564 ft^2 = 1377 ft \cdot 20 = 27,540 \div 27 = 1020.00 d_3 -$

F-G $+F = 1618 ft^2$ $+G = 2014 ft^2 = 1816 ft \cdot 20 = 36,320 \div 27 = 1345.19 d_3 +$
 $-F = 1564 ft^2$ $-G = 1644 ft^2 = 1604 ft \cdot 20 = 32,080 \div 27 = 1188.15 d_3 -$

G-H $+G = 2014 ft^2$ $+H = 1516 ft^2 = 1365 ft \cdot 20 = 27,300 \div 27 = 1011.11 d_3 +$
 $-G = 1644 ft^2$ $-H = 1718 ft^2 = 1681 ft \cdot 20 = 33,620 \div 27 = 1245.19 d_3 -$

H-I $+H = 1516 ft^2$ $+I = 1046 ft^2 = 1281 ft \cdot 20 = 25,620 \div 27 = 948.89 d_3 +$
 $-H = 1718 ft^2$ $-I = 1444 ft^2 = 1581 ft \cdot 20 = 31,620 \div 27 = 1171.11 d_3 -$

I-J $+I = 1046 ft^2$ $+J = 784 ft^2 = 915 ft \cdot 20 = 18,300 \div 27 = 677.78 d_3 +$
 $-I = 1444 ft^2$ $-J = 1490 ft^2 = 1464 ft \cdot 20 = 29,280 \div 27 = 1084.44 d_3 -$

J-K $+J = 784 ft^2$ $+K = 670 ft^2 = 127 ft \cdot 20 = 25,400 \div 27 = 940.74 d_3 +$
 $-J = 1490 ft^2$ $-K = 1852 ft^2 = 1671 ft \cdot 20 = 33,420 \div 27 = 1237.78 d_3 -$

K-L $+K = 670 ft^2$ $+L = 590 ft^2 = 630 ft \cdot 20 = 12,600 \div 27 = 466.67 d_3 +$
 $-K = 1852 ft^2$ $-L = 2062 ft^2 = 1957 ft \cdot 20 = 39,140 \div 27 = 1449.63 d_3 -$

SHEET (7)

Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)

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$$\begin{aligned}
 &+L = 590 \quad +M = 500 \text{ ft} = 545.20 = 10,900 \div 27 = 403.74 \text{ ds} + \\
 L-M &-L = 2062 \quad -M = 2244 \text{ ft} = 2153.20 = 43,060 \div 27 = 1594.89 \text{ ds} - \\
 &+M = 500 \text{ ft} \quad +N = 422 \text{ ft} = 461.20 = 9220 \div 27 = 341.59 \text{ ds} + \\
 M-N &-M = 2244 \text{ ft} \quad -N = 2260 \text{ ft} = 2252.20 = 45,040 \div 27 = 1668.14 \text{ ds} - \\
 &+N = 422 \text{ ft} \quad +O = 282 \text{ ft} = 352.20 = 7040 \div 27 = 260.79 \text{ ds} + \\
 N-O &-N = 2260 \text{ ft} \quad -O = 1750 \text{ ft} = 2005.20 = 40,100 \div 27 = 1485.29 \text{ ds} - \\
 &+O = 282 \text{ ft} \quad +P = 212 \text{ ft} = 247.20 = 4940 \div 27 = 182.79 \text{ ds} + \\
 O-P &-O = 1750 \text{ ft} \quad -P = 1314 \text{ ft} = 1532.20 = 30,640 \div 27 = 1134.89 \text{ ds} - \\
 &+P = 212 \text{ ft} \quad +Q = 120 \text{ ft} = 166.20 = 3320 \div 27 = 122.99 \text{ ds} + \\
 P-Q &-P = 1314 \text{ ft} \quad -Q = 682 \text{ ft} = 998.20 = 19960 \div 27 = 739.25 \text{ ds} - \\
 &+Q = 120 \text{ ft} \quad +R = 6 \text{ ft} = 63.20 = 1260 \div 27 = 46.64 \text{ ds} + \\
 Q-R &-Q = 682 \text{ ft} \quad -R = 218 \text{ ft} = 465.20 = 9300 \div 27 = 344.44 \text{ ds} - \\
 &+R = 6 \text{ ft} \quad +S = 6 \text{ ft} = 6.20 = 120 \div 27 = 4.44 \text{ ds} + \\
 R-S &-R = 218 \text{ ft} \quad -S = 56 \text{ ft} = 152.20 = 3040 \div 27 = 112.64 \text{ ds} -
 \end{aligned}$$

TOTAL FILL 12,616.2

TOTAL CUT 15,452.75

$$\text{CUT } 15,452.75 \text{ yds} @ \$3.00 = \underline{\$46,358.25}$$

$$\text{FILL } 12,616.2 \text{ yds} @ \$1.075 \text{ SH/TONNAGE} = 13,877.8 \text{ yds} \text{ TO USE}$$

$$\text{TO HAUL } 15,749.5 \text{ yds} @ \$3.00 = \underline{\$47,248.5}$$

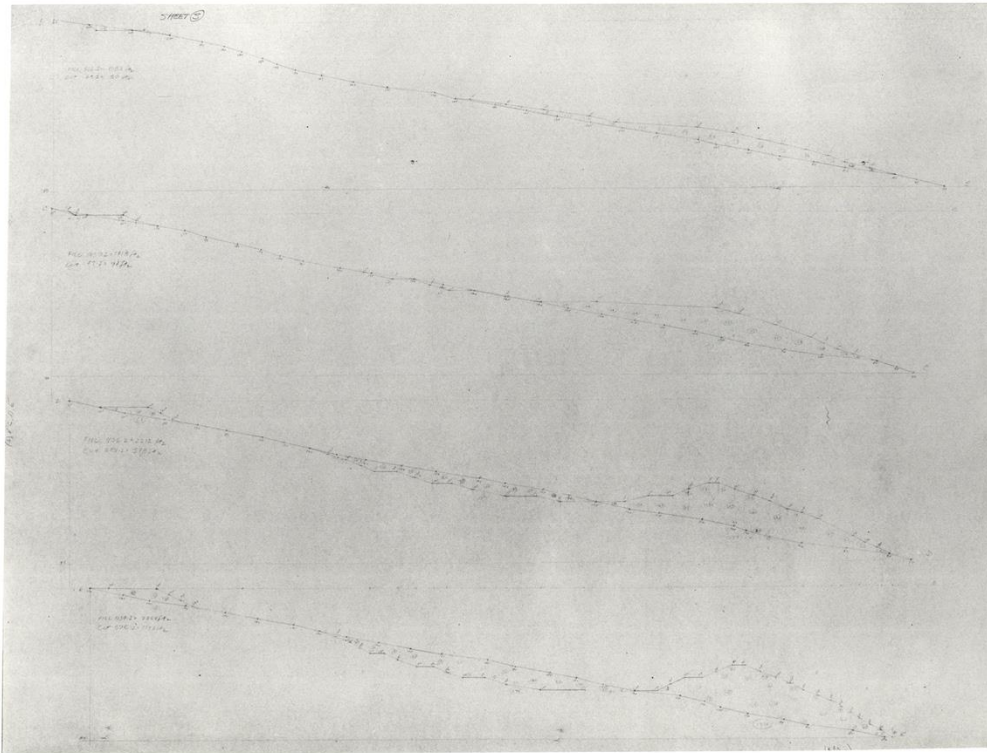
SHEET 8

Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)

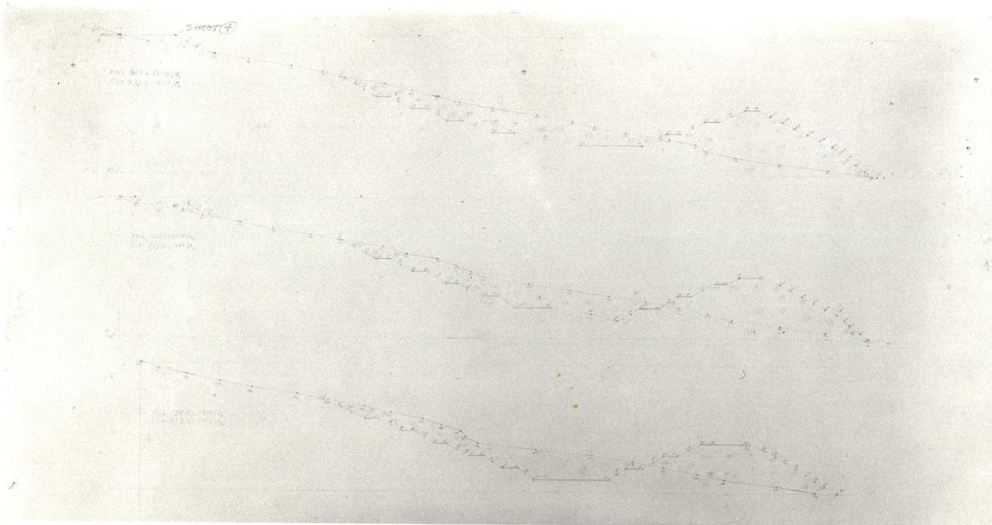
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Section drawing for *Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)*. Series 1747, King County Archives, Seattle, WA.



Section drawing for *Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)*. Series 1747, King County Archives, Seattle, WA.

Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)

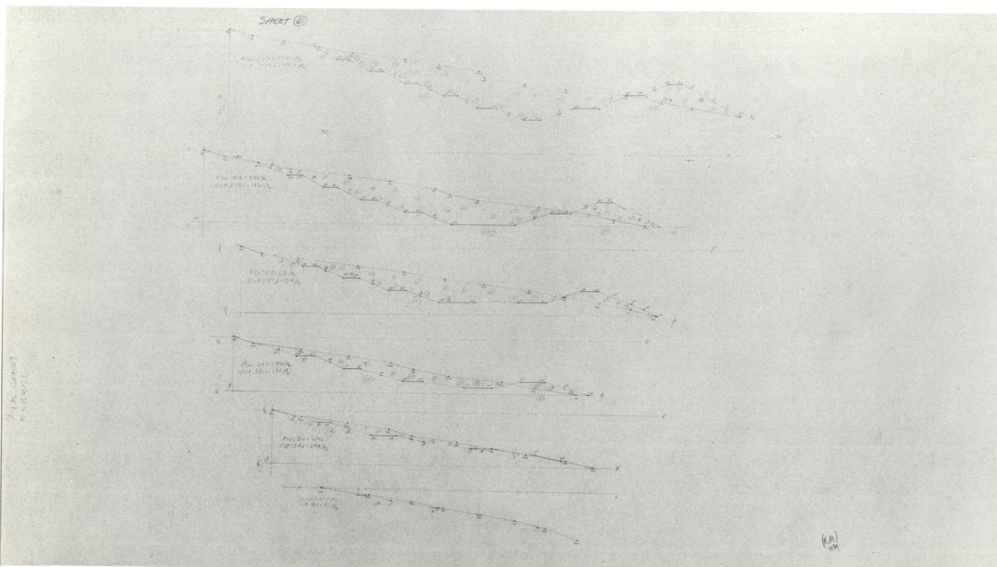
Name of Property

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Section drawing for *Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)*. Series 1747, King County Archives, Seattle, WA.



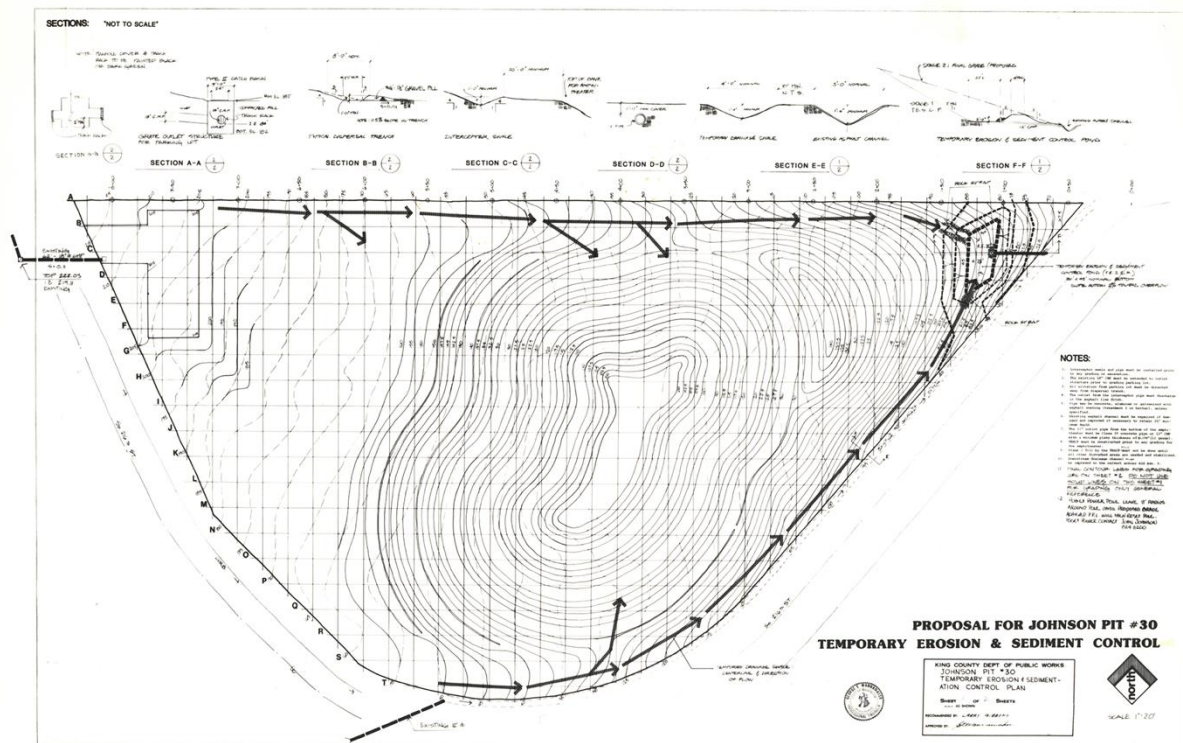
Section drawing for *Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)*. Series 1747, King County Archives, Seattle, WA.

Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)

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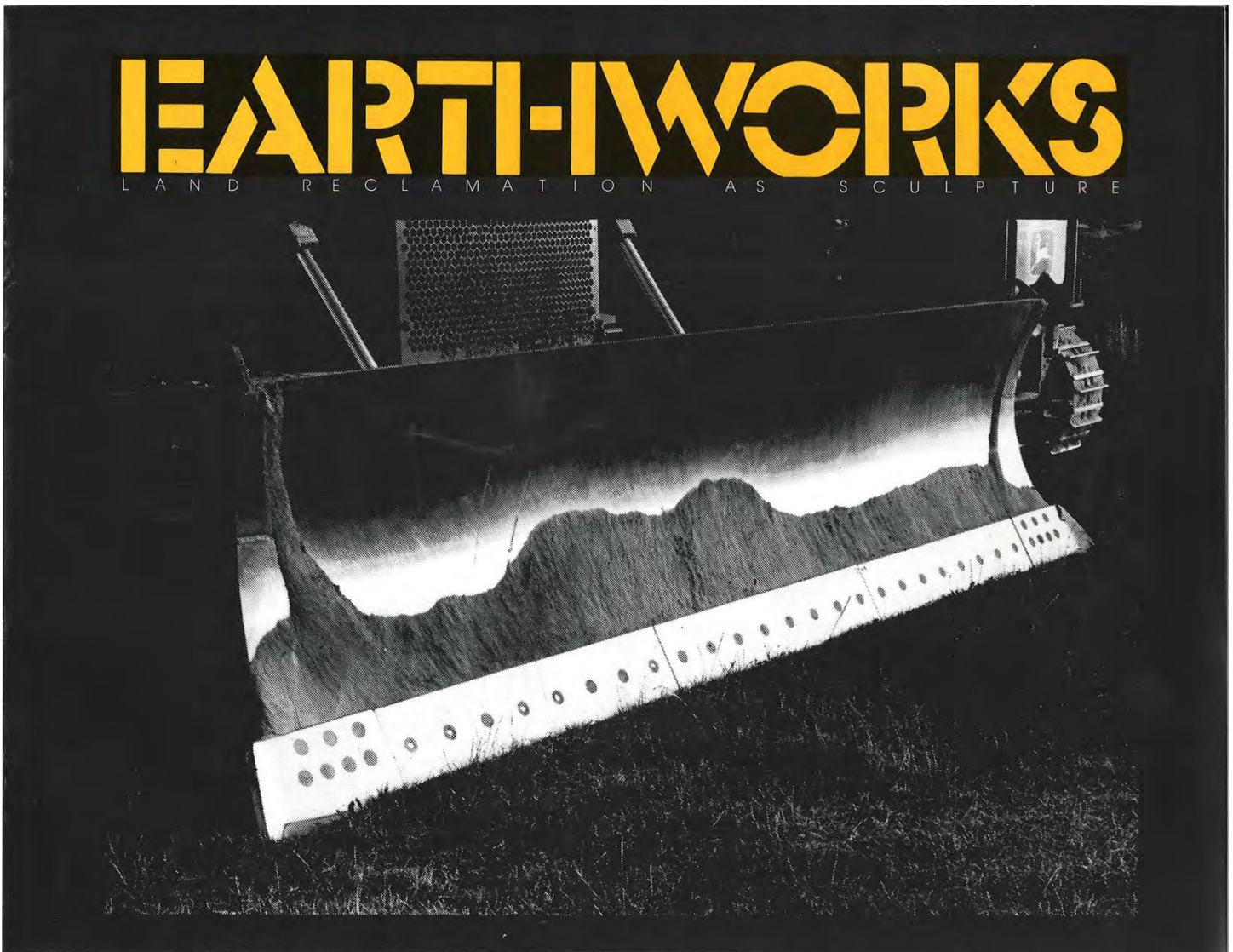
Temporary Erosion and Sediment Control. Series 1747, King County Archives, Seattle, WA.

Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)

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The cover of the Earthworks Symposium catalog. *Series 278, King County Archives, Seattle, WA.*

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EARTH-WORKS

LAND RECLAMATION AS SCULPTURE

Schedule of Symposium Events

July 31, 8 p.m., University of Washington, Kane Hall, Room 130.

- Introduction of symposium artists
- Keynote address by Robert Morris

August 7, 8 p.m., University of Washington, Kane Hall, Room 130.

- Panel discussion, symposium artists, government and private industry. Morrie Alhadeff, past Chairman of Seattle Arts Commission, will be guest facilitator.

August 14, 8 p.m., University of Washington, Kane Hall, Room 130.

- Landscape architects, environmentalists and symposium artists. Ronald Onarato, Assistant Professor, University of Rhode Island, will be guest facilitator.

August 17, 7 p.m., Seattle Art Museum, Modern Art Pavilion, Seattle Center.

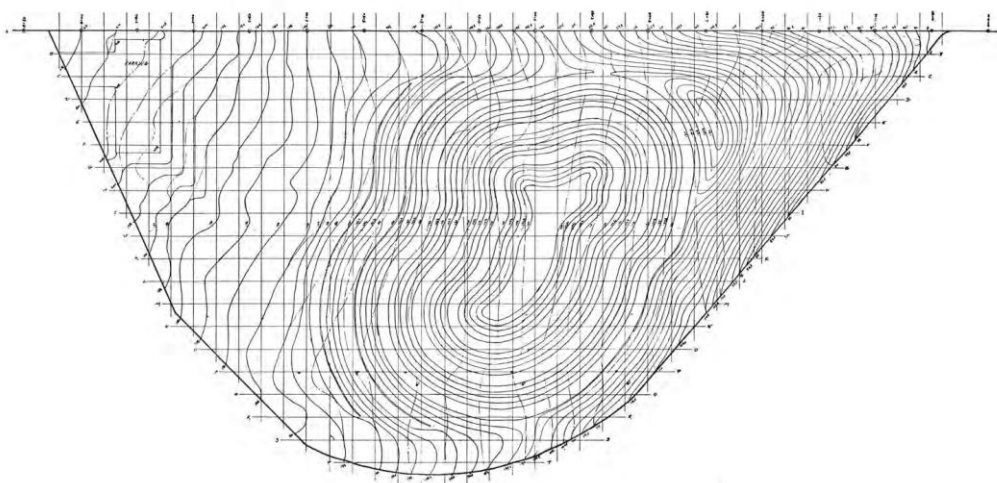
- Opening of Earthworks: Land Reclamation as Sculpture, an exhibit of models and drawings prepared by symposium artists. Original musical composition by David Mahler.
- Informal dinner and dance at the Flag Pavilion, Seattle Center. The rock groups "SKYBOYS" and "HOTWIRE" will perform. Dinner and dance \$15, dance only \$5. Dinner 8 p.m., dance begins 9 p.m. This event is sponsored by the Contemporary Art Council of the Seattle Art Museum. For reservations call 206-447-4697. Helen Gurvich, CAC Coordinator.

August 18, 9:30 a.m.-12 noon, 2 p.m.-4 p.m. Playhouse, Seattle Center.

- Summation: Brian O'Doherty, Media Arts Program Director, National Endowment for the Arts, will be keynote speaker and facilitator. Nancy Rosen, freelance curator, N.Y.C., guest speaker with symposium artists. Sponsored by Contemporary Art Council of the Seattle Art Museum.

Schedule of Symposium Events, from the Symposium catalog. *Series 278, King County Archives, Seattle, WA.*

Execution of Major Earthwork: Robert Morris' Design



Proposal for the Site at Johnson Pit No. 30

Morris' proposal for the Site at Johnson Pit No. 30, from the Symposium catalog. *Series 278, King County Archives, Seattle, WA.*

Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)

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Morris Site
#1
in construction

Looking east over the Kent Valley from the uncleared site.
Photo: Colleen Chartier, 1979. Series 1747, King County Archives, Seattle, WA.

Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)

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1 FOTO 53C

43%

P-63

Excavating, grading and shaping the Morris Earthwork at Johnson Pit #30.
Photo: Colleen Chartier, 1979. *Series 1747, King County Archives, Seattle, WA.*



Excavating, grading and shaping the Morris Earthwork at Johnson Pit #30.
Photo: Colleen Chartier, 1979. *Series 1747, King County Archives, Seattle, WA.*

Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)

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Excavating, grading and shaping the Morris Earthwork at Johnson Pit #30.
Photo: Colleen Chartier, 1979. *Series 1747, King County Archives, Seattle, WA.*



Excavating, grading and shaping the Morris Earthwork at Johnson Pit #30.
Photo: Colleen Chartier, 1979. *Series 1747, King County Archives, Seattle, WA.*

Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)

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Excavating, grading and shaping the Morris Earthwork at Johnson Pit #30.
Photo: Colleen Chartier, 1979. *Series 1747, King County Archives, Seattle, WA.*



Excavating, grading and shaping the Morris Earthwork at Johnson Pit #30.
Photo: Colleen Chartier, 1979. *Series 1747, King County Archives, Seattle, WA.*

Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)

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Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 pixels, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Name of Property: Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)

City or Vicinity: Walla Walla

County: SeaTac **State:** Washington

Photographer: Joe Freeman

Date Photographed: April 2020

Description of Photograph(s) and number:



Looking west across the site.

Robert Morris (1931-2018). Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30), 1979. SeaTac, WA. King County Public Art Collection/4Culture.

Photo: Joe Freeman, April 2020.

Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)

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Looking northeast across the site.

*Robert Morris (1931-2018). Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30), 1979. SeaTac, WA. King County Public Art Collection/4Culture.
Photo: Joe Freeman, April 2020.*



Looking east.

*Robert Morris (1931-2018). Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30), 1979. SeaTac, WA. King County Public Art Collection/4Culture.
Photo: Joe Freeman, April 2020.*

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Looking northeast.

*Robert Morris (1931-2018). Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30), 1979. SeaTac, WA. King County Public Art Collection/4Culture.
Photo: Joe Freeman, April 2020.*



Slopes, terraces, and the mound.

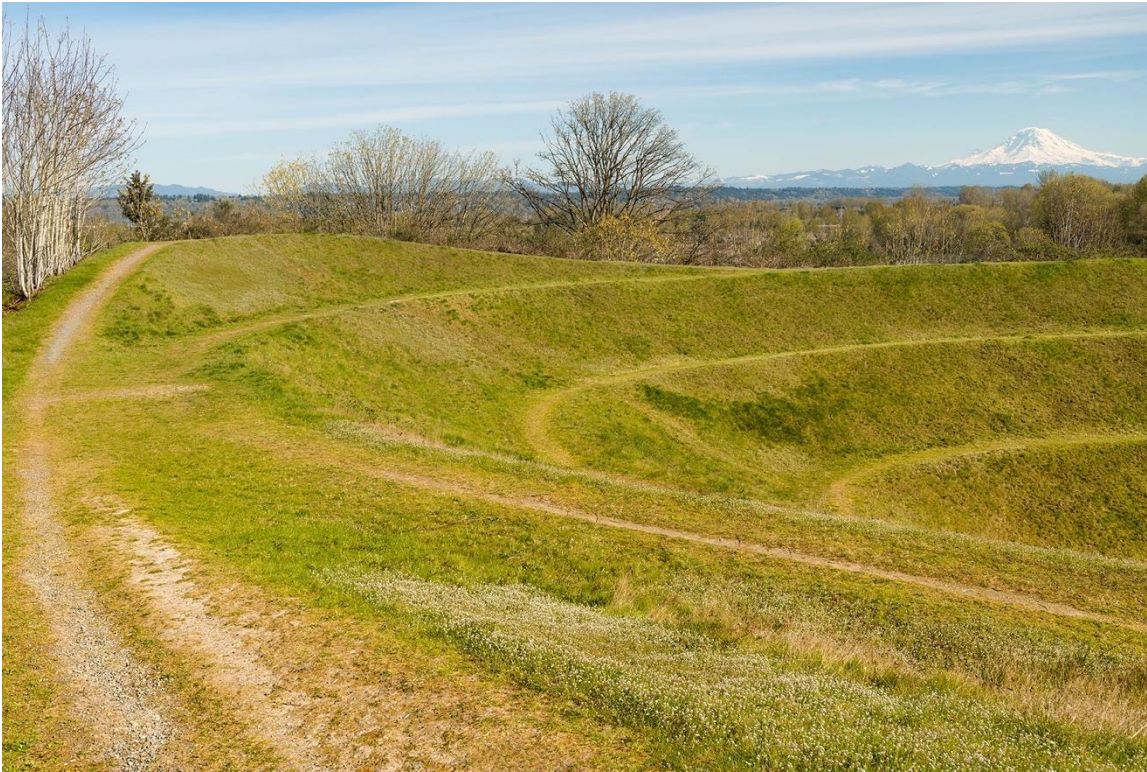
*Robert Morris (1931-2018). Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30), 1979. SeaTac, WA. King County Public Art Collection/4Culture.
Photo: Joe Freeman, April 2020.*

Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)

Name of Property

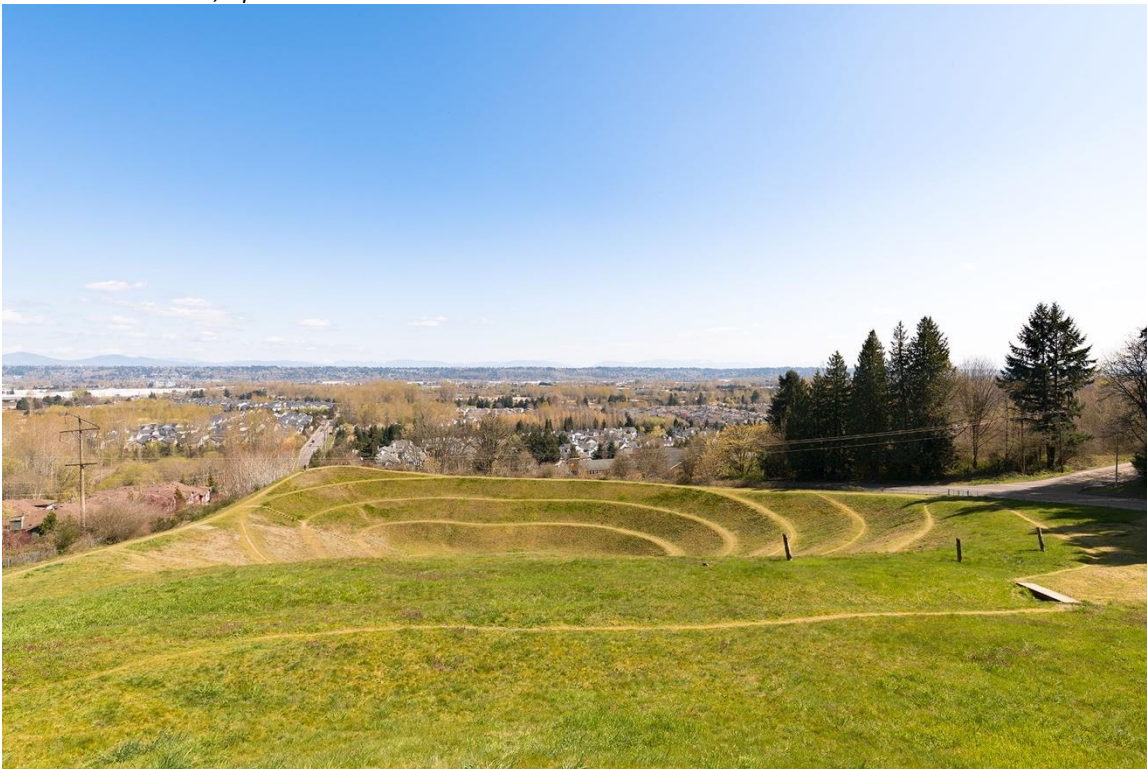
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Perimeter trail and the mound with Mount Rainier in the distance.

*Robert Morris (1931-2018). Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30), 1979. SeaTac, WA. King County Public Art Collection/4Culture.
Photo: Joe Freeman, April 2020.*



Looking southeast with perimeter trail, foot bridge, and tree stumps in foreground.

*Robert Morris (1931-2018). Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30), 1979. SeaTac, WA. King County Public Art Collection/4Culture.
Photo: Joe Freeman, April 2020.*

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Slopes and terraces, looking northwest.

*Robert Morris (1931-2018). Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30), 1979. SeaTac, WA. King County Public Art Collection/4Culture.
Photo: Joe Freeman, April 2020.*

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The granite marker at the parking lot entrance. *Photo: Kasia Keeley, May 2021.*

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Driveway and parking lot entrance, looking north. *Photo: Kasia Keeley, May 2021.*



Parking lot, looking southwest. *Photo: Kasia Keeley, May 2021.*

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Northside pedestrian entrance to the site. *Photo: Kasia Keeley, May 2021.*



Bike racks in the parking lot. *Photo: Kasia Keeley, May 2021.*

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Wood bench. Photo: Kasia Keeley, May 2021.



Perimeter trail stairs along the site's north edge. Photo: Kasia Keeley, May 2021.

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Perimeter trail stairs. Photo: Kasia Keeley, May 2021.

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Stairs descend into the earthwork. *Photo: Kasia Keeley, May 2021.*



Stairs descend into the earthwork. *Photo: Kasia Keeley, May 2021.*

Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)
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Stairs descend into the earthwork. *Photo: Rich Freitas, September 2019.*



The perimeter trail rings the earthwork. *Photo: Kasia Keeley, May 2021.*

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Tree stumps. *Photo: Kasia Keeley, May 2021.*



One of the remaining tree stumps. *Photo: Kasia Keeley, May 2021.*

Untitled Earthwork (Johnson Pit #30)

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Foot bridge on the perimeter trail. Photo: Rich Freitas, September 2019.

Property Owner: (Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name King County c/o 4Culture

street & number 101 Prefontaine Pl S

telephone (206) 296-7580

city or town Seattle

state WA

zip code 98104

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.